

Unbidden

camnz

Harry Potter

Complete



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Summary

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Description:

Lucius Malfoy had the perfect life until she came with her ready smiles and stomach churning friendliness, and destroyed everything. Time travel fic, ignores Dumbledore's death.

Chapter 1

Unbidden

Lucius Malfoy is a man who is very comfortable in his life. He is please with his family, his position in this world and their common future prospects. He has everything a man could want. A heir who he is proud of. A lovely boy who respects the family name and a delicious streak of cruelty that has given Lucius many moments of enjoyment. He has a wife who he can tolerate and more important tolerates him. They do not see much of each other, but she is a beautiful jewel on his arm whenever he needs one. She also doesn't ask anything off him provided there are enough funds available for her purchases and her social activities.

He has always been working to promote the family and is currently working on the behalf of the Dark Lord to cleanse the corruption in the magical world. Lucius father was the one who saw the potential in the young man and the family have been dedicated followers ever since. The Dark Lord had some distasteful qualities, but he was a means to an end. Plain and simple. There was of course some resistance, as would be expected, from Dumbledore and his rag tag band of children and misfits.

Lucius thought the old man was foolish, probably senile. They made some noise, but they weren't taken seriously by anyone. Lucius had also made sure that no one paid them any heed through his influence with the Daily Prophet. In truth, Lucius would have preferred to do what was necessary without the Dark Lord, who returned recently and punctuated the event by killing a boy. Which was crass behaviour according to Lucius, but who was he to oppose the prevailing wind. He was a means to an end, that all.

Lucius foresaw that Lord Voldemort would eventually be disposed of when he couldn't control his base nature. The man couldn't plan his way out of a paper bag if is life depended on it, but for now, the discomfort he caused was helping them clean out some of the more undesirable elements at the ministry.

There were some unpleasantries to deal with, but on the whole, everything was going swimmingly. He had the best wine, the best gastronomic delights and the best whores. He never actually lay with them, but they would take care of his needs as he sat by his desk. He liked watching as they tended to him with their mouths. Clean, like he preferred it. His first time was with a whore. His father had gotten her for him on his sixteenth birthday. It hadn't liked it that much. It was messy and undignified really. Having them take him in their mouth was better. No mess and he liked the sense of power he felt over them. Of course he had to lay with his wife a few times to secure his heir, but it had been a strained affair on both of their parts. Both were well pleased when she finally fell with child and the fact that it was a male, secured the fact that they never really had to touch each other again.

His son was now the same age as he had been with his first whore, maybe a little older. He hadn't gotten him a whore. It was a little distasteful. His son did not seem to need the assistance anyway. The girls were different nowadays. When he was at school, a pureblooded girl would never let anyone near her, but the young ladies now seemed less concerned about

their chastity. Lucius didn't quite approve. During his time, that had been what the mudbloods were for. They had their place in society and it was for things that wholesome girls were not.

A few of his contemporaries had carried out physical relationships with mudblood girls, not that he had ever gone for that. Again distasteful. They weren't badly treated. There weren't that many of them and somehow whatever they provided was valuable enough to ensure relatively good treatment provided they kept their expectations in check. At the time Lucius had found nothing more disappointing than someone running off and marrying one of them. But someone had gone and convinced the mudbloods that they were equals in this society.

Well, there was that nasty business last year at the Ministry that got him imprisoned for a while. Azkaban had been bad, but being bested by Harry Potter and his team of nitwits was embarrassing. Not to mention, the Dark Lord, deciding to enter into the fray, thereby blowing the advantage they had with him being hidden. Now it was all the harder to keep him under some kind of control.

Withstanding that little detour, things were progressing nicely. They were increasing their control of the Ministry. They had more or less complete control over the media outside. Dumbledore and his children were all nicely tucked away in Hogwarts. While he was away in Azkaban, the Dark Lord had cooked up some hare brained scheme that Draco would assassinate Dumbledore. Good thing he got out of there and managed to distract the Dark Lord from his idiotic plans.

The Dark Lord was still hell bent on killing Dumbledore, which Lucius thought was unnecessary and provoking. Dumbledore's credibility was already at an all time low. The conditions were perfect for stitching up control of the Ministry, but Voldemort's capacity for distraction was great. Lucius did not however underestimate the power of Dumbledore as a wizard, perhaps the best outcome for all would be if Dumbledore killed Voldemort. Actually that would be perfect. Maybe it was time to start organising such an outcome.

And that was how Lucius Malfoy decided to start assisting the Order of the Phoenix. He would have to inform Severus, who would initiate it all. Severus was the only person he could vaguely consider as a friend. Although he has always known that Severus was Dumbledore's man. He has also always known that Severus was completely and utterly devoted to that mudblood girl in his class, until to an unwitting degree participated in her death. Severus had never forgiven himself for that. While his attachment to a mudblood was disgraceful, and even though her loss was of no consequence to the wizarding world, Lucius could grudgingly accept that Severus had loved this girl and had been mourning her loss for many years now. He himself had very little comprehension for love, but he understood that it was a debilitating affliction for others.

Hermione had settled into the role of Head Girl and it kept her fairly busy. The Head Boy was a Ravenclaw, who she got on with fairly well. She was busier than any year so far with all of her Head duties, NEWT studies, as well as the muggle studies her parents wanted her to do in preparation for University Entrance exams. She wasn't sure about what she wanted to do, but listened to her parents' plea for her not to limit her options.

As a consequence, Professor McGonagall had allowed her to use the time turner again. She spent twice the time in the library at night, even pulling out a computer when there wasn't

anyone in sight. Dumbledore had specifically allowed a spot in the library for the use of electronic equipment to accommodate her, for which she was very grateful.

Harry still has a bit of an obsession with Draco Malfoy, but on the whole, Draco Malfoy didn't have the pale sickly look he did last year. Maybe his father being in prison had affected him strongly, she'd guessed. Lucius had managed to weedle himself out of prison without much obstacle, which infuriated her after what he'd done. Granted it was the LeStrange woman who had killed Sirius, but still he had organised it all.

It didn't matter, Hermione dismissed the thoughts from her head. Thinking of him and all the injustice in this world just ended up depressing her. Maybe that was why she wasn't so quick to dismiss a possible future in the muggle world. The older she got the more she could see the flaws that ran through this culture beneath the wonders of magic. What was it that muggle author had said, 'Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely'. Maybe magic was a force for corruption. It was power after all and there were tonnes of people in this world who felt they were entitled.

Closer to home, Harry and Ginny were getting close, as was Ron and his 'puke' girlfriend Lavender. Watching Ron and Lavender's sloppy kissing was disgusting. It really was enough to put anyone off the opposite sex. Hermione certainly didn't have time and she was sure to shut down any boy who even looked at her.

Dumbledore's army was still going strong. The tension in the world was palpable. Everyone knew Voldemort was back. And although there were the odd call for Dumbledore to step down, most parents felt much better having him there guarding their children. As people started disappearing, maybe the school was the safest place to be.

Hermione was running late for one of the Dumbledore's army sessions. She had just finished a test she'd studied the whole morning for, so she was already fifteen minutes late. Harry's teaching abilities was coming on in leaps and bounds, there may actually be a future for him here at Hogwarts.

Hermione threw her bag down and joined the line. They were doing some of the lesser known defensive spells and they were supposed to do it one at a time, then take a step to the left. The line was getting a bit confused and when she'd thrown her hex, then stepped to the left, she was being hit before she had time to react. Which was completely embarrassing, but what was worse was that she didn't even feel the hex. She should be feeling the hex, maybe she was getting sick.

Instead she heard a bit of buzzing, which was strange. The buzzing grew louder and it took Hermione a few seconds to realise it was the timeturner under her shirt. Her hands panicked to rip it off her but it stuck to the inside of her sweater, so it took a few yanks, but finally she got it out and around her neck, and threw it aside. When she looked up there wasn't anyone in the room.

Oh no. She knew she'd been transport somewhere, otherwise Harry and everyone else would be standing there looking at her like she'd turned bright green. She rushed after the time turner which looked a bit melted. It was not a healthy look for a time turner and the inner wheel spun around freely and she turned it over. That was not good.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

At least the corridor looked exactly the same, Hermione reassured herself. As she got closer to the outer parts of the castle, the chill in the air told her that it was colder than when she'd left, which was bad. It was winter or close to it, which meant that she must have moved back close to a year. She was going to get into so much trouble for this, maybe she'd have to be sent somewhere to wait out the rest of the year before rejoining her time. She tried desperately to think of where she would be, but realised that she had no idea what day it was. She would have to ask the first student she came across.

Which incidentally was completely unknown to Hermione. A short, squat fifth year with an ill suited pink headband matching her nail polish. Hermione felt a pang of guilt at the thought that nothing could pretty up that horribly unfortunate face, which looked strangely familiar. Maybe it was one of those students she just didn't notice.

She continued a bit further and with a second face she didn't recognise, Hermione started to get really worried. The sight of Professor McGonagall confirmed her worst fears. McGonagall was younger, not young, but much younger. Hermione had never really recognised now pretty McGonagall had been when she was younger. The signs of youth were past, but she had the more settled beauty of a confident mature woman.

After the distraction of McGonagall's young features was gone, Hermione started to hyperventilate. She was back, way back in time. She may not even have been born yet. Which on the upside, meant that she didn't have to avoid herself. Hermione stood there for a full five minutes trying to grapple with the consequences of this little accident. This was a major stuff up. This was beyond going somewhere and waiting it out. This needed to be fixed and with her broken timeturner, she couldn't do it on her own. She might even lose her Head Girl position.

The only thing she could do was go to Dumbledore. Fortunately, with the exception of the people, little had changed at Hogwarts. Professor Dumbledore's office was in the exact same location, and since she didn't know the password, she had to wait until someone came and let her in. Which turned out to be the man himself, much younger, with light brown hair. Still long, with a healthy beard, but much younger.

"And who might you be young lady?" He said kindly.

"I am a student." She said. "Could we have a chat in your office?"

"All right. Follow me Miss..."

"Granger, Hermione Granger."

"And what house are you in, Miss Granger?"

"Gryffindor. How did you know I was a student here?"

“You are wearing our uniform.” He said and Hermione looked down.

“I take it you are not from this time.” He continued and Hermione wasn’t completely surprised. He had always seemed to be all knowing.

“I am from 1997.” She responded.

“That is a twenty five year jump, quite a substantial leap. I take it this was accidental?”

“Yes, the time turner got stuck in my jumper as a hex hit it.”

“I see.” He said. “And you still have this time turner?”

Hermione gave it to him and he turned it over, watching the inner wheel turn freely. “I’m afraid this turner has seen the end of its useful days.”

“I gathered.”

“Well, we will have to devise some way of getting you back.” He said with a smile. “Such an operation is complex and will take some time to prepare. Time does not like being played with so it endeavours to make it as difficult for us as it can. A twenty five year jump into the future will take substantial preparation, but rest assured we will get you back.”

Hermione made a huge sigh of relief.

“What year are you in, Miss Granger?”

“Seventh, sir. I am Head Girl.”

Dumbledore made a nod.

“This is a sensitive question, Miss Granger, but are your parents here at this time?”

“No sir, I am muggleborn.”

“Under the circumstance, Miss Granger, we will treat that as a blessing. Now I must tell you that time is a sensitive thing. As I said, it does not like being played with. Wizards have gone mad contemplating its complexities. The impact you have on the future may have devastating consequences. The seemingly inconsequential thing can have huge ramifications, so it is best have as little influence on this time as possible. That is not to say you have to disengage with it, but be weary that you do not do things of great consequence.”

“What if it was for the better?” She asked.

Dumbledore watched her for a while, then said. “Time is fairly set, Miss Granger. You cannot influence it. The events of your past are set. Bad events cannot be changed, even if you divulge knowledge of them, they cannot change. The knowledge you divulge now will only form in reality in your correct timeline, but it will influence the memories of the people affected, thereby tainting them with knowledge that should not be. This can affect the whole timeline of memories from this point to the your correct time.”

“But I prevented some unfortunate events before through the use of a timeturner.” Hermione said and Dumbledore raised his eyebrows in surprise.

“Time is flexible for a few hours after being set, but once beyond this time, history is set. Herein lies the heartbreaking dimension of time. If you’ve suffered a loss, there is nothing

you can do to change it.” He said. “Hope is reliant on a belief in the potential of the future, Miss Granger. It is not your place to influence that.”

“Yes sir.” Hermione said feeling chastised but not sure why.

“Now, perhaps you need to be shown around.” Dumbledore continued. “The Head Girl is currently absent, so the Head Boy will have to do it. Dumbledore called an elf and asked it to go retrieve Lucius Malfoy.

Hermione’s eyes widened when she heard the name.

“But sir.” She said, “I am a muggleborn. Perhaps someone else would be better?”

The statement surprised Dumbledore.

“You will be safe in his care, Miss Granger.” He said finally. “Lucius Malfoy completes his duties without deviance.”

Hermione expression told her that she wasn’t so sure.

“Perhaps you should tell me a little of what you know about future events, Miss Granger. But we will leave that for another time.” He said after a moment of quiet contemplation.

Hermione nodded but was a little confused at the conflicting message. Although it was Dumbledore and she would give him any information he wanted if it would possibly help destroy Voldemort.

A knock on the door, told her that Lucius Malfoy had appeared. Hermione heart speed up to the point where she could feel it slamming in her chest. The last time she’d seen him, he’d had her and her friends pinned down in the Ministry, ready to kill them to get Harry’s co-operation. She feared this man.

But it was not a man at the door, it was a boy. Rather in between a boy and a man. His hair was still long, not as long as when she knew him, but it went past his shoulders. The clear gray eyes surprised her as they seemed to lack some element of horribleness.

“You called, Head Master.” He said in a familiar trawl, but again the viciousness in it wasn’t the same.

“We have a new student. Who has just transferred in from Beauxbaton.” He said with a wink to Hermione. “If you could be so kind as to show her what she needs to know, it would be much appreciated.”

Lucius gave a nod and stepped aside for Hermione to walk past him. Hermione’s heart sped up even more walking so close by him.

“This way.” He said. “I will take you to the Great Hall.”

“It’s alright. I have seen the Great Hall.” She said but continued when Lucius raised one of his aristocratic eyebrows. “I visited once on an interschool exchange.” She said grappling for something.

“You were here during the Triwizard tournament?” He said. “I don’t remember seeing you.”

“Yes. Briefly. I left after a few days to attend a family function.”

He seemed accept this.

“So what do you need to see?” He said and turned to her.

Hermione squirmed under his scrutiny. The cool, calm regard was unnerving.

“I think I am fine.” She said.

“I am supposed to show you around.” He stated.

“How about, if I need anything, I will ask.” She stated.

“Fine.” He said and turned on his heel.

Hermione watched his slim form as he walk away. Not the most friendly guy, but he hadn't been horrible either. Dumbledore made him sound like the height of efficiency. Maybe he was. That would make him very different from Draco. She was still gobsmacked by him. He seemed so young. Young in the way she had never realised he could be. His skin was porcelain white and smooth. She wasn't even sure if he shaved yet, his skin was so smooth. Did Draco have the same white skin? She'd never noticed.

Anyway, she dismissed the oddity that was Lucius Malfoy and made her way to Professor McGonagall's office to be inducted into the Gryffindor dorm. McGonagall called the seventh year Gryffindor prefects to help, and Hermione was again shocked when a young Arthur Weasley and Molly Prewitt walked into McGonagall's office.

They were both as friendly as she'd expect them to be. Hermione couldn't help staring at them to the point where they were probably starting to wonder about her sanity.

Well this was the oddest day she had ever experienced, she decided. First Lucius Malfoy, now Arthur Weasley, who looked like a big puppy dog. Molly obviously had the biggest crush on Arthur and he seemed completely oblivious. How typical.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Hermione slept like a log that night. She even missed breakfast and her first class. Normally this would be unforgiveable in her book, but considering she'd travelled back in time 25 years, she gave herself a break just this once.

It was strange sitting in a class full of unfamiliar people. They obviously thought it was strange too as they kept staring at her. Hermione wasn't entirely surprised when Molly made an effort to befriend her. Molly chatted whenever the professor had his back turned. Hermione could only smile and marvel at the girl who she wholeheartedly loved. She talked about Arthur incessantly. Apparently they had muggle studies together next.

Hermione skipped muggle studies, she figured she knew enough about them and sitting through classes aimed at people who know very little, it was frankly a waste of time. Instead, Hermione had Potions next. Advanced Potions with Professor Slughorn. Unfortunately the class were a few months ahead of where she left off, so she would probably struggle a bit. Although not as badly as if she hadn't read through all the books during the summer.

She decided that she would be upfront with Slughorn about this, perhaps he would give her some more material to catch up.

"I see." He said when she explained that although she was quite proficient, there were a few months gap in her tuition. "Well, I will pair you with the best student then. He, as it happens, is without a partner and can assist you in catching up."

She smiled and congratulated herself on dealing with this issue head on instead of hiding it and trying to make up for it on her own. Well pleased until she realised that the only table with only one student was the one where Lucius Malfoy was sitting. The smile slid from her face as she saw him. He didn't necessarily look all that pleased himself.

Maybe he didn't see the tutoring of remedial students as the honour as she had always taken it. She took the seat next to Lucius Malfoy and opened up the notebook she had borrowed off Molly.

"Haven't you even got a text book?" Lucius said without looking at her.

"It seems to be inaccessible at the moment." Hermione said, feeling the loss of all her things as she only arrived with the clothes on her back.

"Are you unable to afford one?" He asked and Hermione felt the heckles rise up her back.

"I actually have one." She said through clenched teeth. "A more advanced copy as a matter of fact, but as I said it is inaccessible at the moment."

Lucius raised his eyebrow and turned his attention back to the professor. He didn't say anything more until the last session of the class then they were supposed to talk about the projects they will be working on together for the next few months.

“They shouldn’t let students into this class if they are unable to do the work.” He said. “It particularly annoys me when I get stuck having to drag them along.”

Hermione could only smile, because it beat smashing his face in.

“Well, you shouldn’t have got yourself stuck without a partner then.” She said in an overly cheery voice. “What’s the matter, can’t find anyone who wants to be friends with you? Sadly, this is just a natural consequence of being the guy who is always picked last for the teams.”

Lucius’ eyes narrowed and he returned his gaze to his book.

Hermione realised that she had hit a nerve. She was stumped as she realised that it was true. No one had wanted to partner with him. Was he unpopular? She gazed around the room but couldn’t really pick up on anything. Fancy that, she thought to herself, Lucius Malfoy is a social beatnick. A term she’d learnt from her grandmother. She couldn’t suppress a laugh.

Draco had gone through periods of social loserdom due to his pervasive nastiness, but as hormones kicked in, he seemed to be doing ok. He certainly didn’t seem to be struggling in getting attention from the girlies, as revolting as that was to witness. Maybe that particular apple fell some ways from the tree.

When class ended, he turned to her and said, “If you require me to tutor you, you will have to do it during my office hours?”

“Office hours?” She asked, smiling, she couldn’t help but smile whenever she looked at him. Badass scary Death Eater Lucius Malfoy was socially awkward. Justice.

“I am Head Boy.” He said in a tone that could have come out of Percy Wealsey. “Students can demand my time during specific hours.”

“Just give me your notes.” She said. “I’ll be fine.”

She got up and walked out of the class as soon as he reluctantly handed over his notes. So much for being upfront and taking her time to adjust. By next week, she would know everything. By the looks of Lucius Malfoy’s meticulous notes and neat, constrained hand writing, everything she would need would be in there.

It was lunch time and Hermione was starving. She found Molly and sat down at the Gryffindor table. She could hear the first years down the table a bit, being amazed by something. She did a double take as she noticed one of the first years. He looked so much like Harry. It hit her like thunder when she realised it was James Potter. Just a little boy with clear blue eyes and smooth childlike cheeks. You could tell by looking at him that there was mischief in him.

Next to him was Sirius, looking young in ways Hermione could never imagine. She had realised a while back that she’d had a bit of a crush on him. The thirty some year old man who acted like a teenager. Hermione couldn’t help but tear up as she watched them messing around while they ate. They were typical little boys without a clue of what the future held for them. The cruelty of it all made her lose her appetite.

She turned away to calm down and saw a little girl and a little boy entering the hall. She recognised little Severus Snape right away. A child version of him that almost looked cartoonish. He was much cuter as a child than you would ever imagine. Mostly due to the big

dark eyes and the pale smooth skin that looked a little like porcelain. He said goodbye to the girl and went towards the Slytherin table. Hermione followed him with her gaze as he sat down with the other first year Slytherins.

Lucius was sitting at the table with the older boys. There but a little apart. He wasn't really participating in the conversation.

"Is Lucius Malfoy unpopular?" She turned to Molly and asked.

"Uh, he's the Head Boy." Molly said apparently struggling for something to say. "He's not exactly unpopular, he's just different. All business. Nobody dislikes him as such, he's just not approachable."

"I thought approachability would be a quality you wanted in a Head Boy." Hermione said.

"He does a good job of it. But mostly, we tend to deal with the Head Girl. She's not here at the moment."

Hermione gave Lucius back his notes in the next potions class. She even had a bag to pull the notebook out of this time.

"I won't be needed anymore." She said.

"Are you sure?" He said with another raised eyebrow.

"Yes. Thank you. Your notes are fairly clear."

They paid attention to Slughorn as he talked about the medicinal potions they were doing over the next month. When it came time to work on their project, Hermione turned her attention back to Lucius.

"You are a muggleborn." He stated. Obviously a fact he had ascertained somewhere.

Hermione couldn't help but freeze at the statement. She wasn't sure of what the implications were. Him pulling out his wand and attacking her in class seemed a bit far reached, but then she knew his future and could guess what kind of beliefs lay beneath.

"I am." She said.

He did not say anything more.

"I think we should do a medicinal potion for our project." He stated after a while.

Hermione shrugged. She didn't actually care.

"Do you have an interest in medicine?" She asked.

"I suppose so."

"Are you planning to train in the medi field?" She was curious to know how he saw his own future.

"No."

"Oh." Was all she could say.

"It is not done in my family." He said.

“My entire family works in medicine, have done for generations.”

“They are muggles.” He stated.

“They are, they actually have medical needs as well.” She said watching him to a sign of the beliefs that lay underneath. Nothing particularly showed on his face.

“I didn’t think Beauxbaton took muggleborns.” He said after a while.

“They made an exception.” She said and looked away, fully aware that she was not the best liar in the world.

He studied her to her extreme discomfort.

“Why are you looking at me?”

“Just curious. They seldom make exceptions.” He said.

Hermione didn’t think he looked suspicious, which could mean that he believed it. In that case, it kind of sounded like a compliment.

She returned her attention to the task at hand as they narrowed down the potion they wanted to do. In the end they settled on trying to improve the blood replenishing potion. Might as well do something that may be useful in the war, she thought bitterly to herself while she worked on the project with the enemy.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Lucius was sitting in his study when he noticed that someone was playing with his memories. He hadn't realised at first what was happening, but the odd sensation was noticeable. First it was just a little mental twinge, but a clear memory came through. It was a stinging remark by a girl about how he was not selected by anyone as a preferred partner. The audacity was unbelievable.

He couldn't recall a time when anyone had made fun of him in such a way. As long as he remembered, he had always been given his due respect. Respect for his position and fear for his capability if they needed convincing. No one made fun of him.

Anger was coursing through him at the memory. This would not be abided with. He re-examined the memory to identify the culprit; a girl in school. He entertained the possibility that this memory had been repressed. Probably by the girl herself, or potentially even her family. He could well imagine making the girl suffer for her impudence. Magically repressed memories did have a potential of popping up out of the blue one day.

He wasn't averse to a new pet project. This girl might have bought herself some time, but that was over now.

He examined the memory again and was shocked to discover that he knew this girl. Not from school, where the memory was from, but this was Harry Potter's mudblood. His anger dissipated and was replaced by curiosity. Now what was Dumbledore doing sending his precious mudblood back in time? Was she there to perhaps influence him? Dumbledore knew better than most that influencing the past was often fruitless.

Voldemort had explored at length the potential to destroy Harry Potter in the past, but had never been able to circumvent time's refusal to change its course. They had been very careful not to be noticed in their activities, but they had been fruitless all the same.

Surely Dumbledore was aware of this. Maybe he would let on that he knew of her interference in his memories after the School Governors meeting coming up in a few days.

He actually knew more of this girl than he wanted to. Voldemort was of course intensely interested in her due to her friendship with Potter, as well as her constant interference in his plans. She certainly was an asset to Potter, having saved his hide on a number of occasions.

Draco has also talked incessantly about the chit. For a while anyway, until around the time he hit puberty. He never really mentioned her again. Ignoring her to a point where Lucius thought for a while that she had left the school. This was not the case, but curiously, his son refused to acknowledge her existence. As is right when it comes to mudbloods, might he add.

It pleased Lucius immensely that Dumbledore hadn't managed to remove him from the Board of Governors for the school, even though he had essentially been sent to jail for attacking some of the students. It attested to his power in this society. He literally could get

away with anything. He couldn't help the smile spreading across his face. With the lunatic Voldemort out of the way, this world would be his for the taking really and he would return it to its former glory.

Now he had to think of how he could best take advantage of whatever Dumbledore was planning sending this girl back in time.

The Governors meeting occurring in its usual boring fashion. Dumbledore greeted him civilly. He didn't let on about any annoyance of still having him on the Board. Dumbledore usually kept his displeasure close to his chest. The man had a manner of remaining distant from the things that were going on around him. Lucius did admire this quality in Dumbledore, but he also knew that Dumbledore had a penchant for supporting the underdog. Hence his support for muggleborns and squibs, and other 'persons' that should be barred from society. Lucius saw this as a weakness. A weakness to be exploited and he would do so to the effect of getting rid of Voldemort.

"Now there has been an unfortunate accident with one of the students and a timeturner." Dumbledore stated to the Governors. "A Miss Hermione Granger has been temporarily misplaced. It seems that she was being hit by a hex, which ended up affecting the time turner she was wearing around her neck. As a result, she has been transported back in time around 25 years."

There was a collective intake of breath by the Governors.

"Now she is safe at Hogwarts and will remain so. She is attending classes as normal until such time as we have worked out a path back. Severus is working on the preparations for her return. It will unfortunately take some time. Her parents have been informed about the situation and we will continue to inform them of our preparations until such time of her return."

Lucius didn't entirely believe it was an accident, but he was willing to entertain the thought that it might be. It did leave Harry Potter without a vital part of his cognitive abilities. Voldemort would undoubtedly find out about this and would want to take advantage of the boy's weakness. Lucius would have to move quickly to ensure he achieved the outcome he wanted. He would have a chat with Severus about this after, now that he was an official member of the Order of the Phoenix, he thought with a smirk.

Hermione watched James and Sirius play for hours. They seemed so happy. She had also identified Lily Evans, who was inseparable from Severus Snape to her eternal surprise. This fact had led her to think long and hard about Professor Snape. How he could go from here to being a Death Eater. How do you attack someone who had obviously at one time been your best friend? She had been around this war long enough to know that nothing was black and white, even in the most black and white situations.

Thinking about Severus Snape and his intentions hurt her head and her heart. Thinking about her own situation hurt even more. She knew that she wasn't really here. Everything felt so real, but from what Dumbledore told her, time could not change, which meant that what she was experiencing was everyone's collective memories of what happened. So what was going on when no one was around and she was still here? She also knew there weren't any answers and that she may go mad as so many had dealing with time.

Catching up in her classes was not difficult. She had felt a little stressed for a while, but she caught up without much effort.

She sat next to Lucius in every potions lesson. They hadn't talked much further, other than about their project. They had agreed to meet in the library on Friday night to plan out the project and all the tasks they needed to do. He was actually the only other person she had ever met that wanted to spend time in the library on Friday night. It was normally the time she got to have the library all to herself.

She got a bit nervous before the meeting and she wasn't sure why. She was fairly confident that he would not attack her, because that was not the space he was in when he was in school. She had also spent a lot of time thinking about him, trying to reconcile the person he is now with the person he was to become. She had never really thought of him as anything more than an evil git.

His future wife was a third year and he didn't notice her at all. She didn't notice him either. She was very much a part of a clique of Slytherin girls. She was beautiful and popular. She had a boyfriend, who was a fifth year. Having a fifth year boyfriend when you're in third year was quite a coup. The world seemed to be her oyster.

Hermione wondered what being married to Lucius Malfoy would do to her. Hermione had only met her once at the World Cup, where she made it clear that she was not all that pleased being seated with the riff raff. Other than that, Hermione didn't know anything about Narcissa Malfoy. Narcissa Black was confident and vivacious.

It really was horrible knowing how all these people would turn out when there was so much potential in a bright future showing in their faces.

"I have made a draft plan for how this project should run." Was the statement that interrupted her thoughts. Lucius was standing across the library table holding a piece of parchment towards her.

"Oh." She said. She wasn't used to being shown the plan after the fact. She was usually the one who did the draft plan for everyone else to agree to. "Let's look it over then."

Lucius sniffed and sat down while Hermione read over the plan. It was logical, meticulous and it flowed well. She was impressed. Maybe even disturbed that Voldemort had this planning ability available to him.

"Maybe we should go interview some of the staff at St. Mungos as well." Hermione said after she studied the plan.

Lucius watched her and seemed to turn over the idea in his head.

"If you wish." His eventual reply was. "Now to distribute the tasks. Are there any which you would be particularly weak at?"

Hermione was surprised at his bluntness.

"I can't think of any that would be of particular challenge." She returned, slightly annoyed at his assumption that she would be weak. "Of course, as I am not from this area, perhaps you should speak to the people in the area with regards to where certain herbs grow."

“I would prefer you do that.” He said in a manner than came across like an order. Hermione tried to stop herself from rolling her eyes. She guessed that speaking to people wasn’t his strongest ability. He probably wasn’t able to establish a good rapport with people, enough for them to spill their secrets of where they got their herbs from.

“Fine.” She said pointedly. “Perhaps I will do the part that requires interaction with other people.”

Lucius narrowed his eyes and returned his gaze to another piece of parchment.

“We will have to start by researching what attempts have been made in the past and the entire history of replenishing potions.”

Hermione gave a quick nod. Annoyed at being told the obvious.

“Perhaps over the next few weeks, we can work here to extract whatever is in this library.”

She bristled at having her nights all planned out by him, but she didn’t argue. It wasn’t like she had anything else to do.

“Then after Christmas, we can seek leave to visit the St. Mungos library.” He continued, scribbling something.

Hermione watch the look of concentration as he reviewed and revised his plan. Watched as he picked up the quill and scribbled neatly on the document. He really was beautiful. Annoying without a doubt, but his features really were striking. The grey almost almond shaped eyes, the straight aristocratic nose and the full mouth.

Hermione shook her head as she realised that she was checking out Lucius Malfoy’s mouth. What was wrong with her? She’d always known he was beautiful, but the fear had always stood in the way of actually appreciating it. She had always seen him as almost a force of nature, beautiful and cruel. The thing that wanted to destroy you, just like a storm. Not caring about what it was destroying.

But she hadn’t seen any cruelty in him here. He was efficient, meticulous, annoying. Probably a lot like her friends saw her. The irony was not lost on her. But he was also guarded. That cruelty must come from somewhere. She refused to believe that they were similar.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

It took Hermione a number of weeks to start noticing the differences between this time and her time. At first she was so pre-occupied with the similarities and with observing the younger versions of the people she knew. She had gotten to know the habits of the first years pretty well. She owed it to Harry to remember as much about them as she could. Hermione adored Lily Evans, although her close friendship with Severus Snape still amazed her.

But the biggest shock was finding out that Rodolphus Lestranges' girlfriend was a muggleborn. Her name was Kristy Malcolm, from Manchester. He walked around with his arm around her neck like something out of Grease. If there had only been some leather jackets involved. But he was flaunting his relationship with this girl. Hermione could tell that Bellatrix Black was not so impressed. Her jealousy, if that was what it was, who knew with the mentally insane, was poorly guarded.

There were a number of the convicted, suspected and dead Death Eaters at the school. The aggression towards her that she had suspected didn't quite materialise. But there was attention. Predatory, leering attention that made her very uncomfortable. But no one called her names or showed any outright hostility. Everyone in the school knew by now that she was a muggleborn.

Hermione watched this relationship between the Kristy girl and Rodolphus. It was a strange thing. He would switch between treating her bad and treating her well. They would argue and make up. Every once in a while, one of them would rest their hand on the other's backside, which told her that they were very much intimate. Hermione knew that such familiarity only grew between people who were very used to each others' bodies.

Hermione wondered what happened to this girl, but recognised that since she had never heard of her, it might not do her any good to dwell on it. Watching them made her feel sick, but something morbid in her couldn't stop. Her mind told her that getting to know the enemy would be an advantage, but it also took her to a place she did want to be in.

Lucius Malfoy wasn't what she had expected. He was nothing like his son. He didn't play Quidditch. He didn't bully students and he didn't have girls falling all over him. He did command respect from everyone. His orders were always obeyed. He didn't need a Crabbe and Goyle backing him up. But he also didn't have a single close relationship. The Slytherins would include him, and he would stay as long as it pleased him.

She met with him to work on their assignment and they did just that. They trawled through all the books in the library. By the time Christmas came, they were had pretty much gone through everything the Hogwarts library had to offer.

As Hermione had no where to go, she was staying over the holiday period. To her surprise, so was Lucius. She hadn't expected that he would stay. Draco never stayed. Hermione started to wonder what his home life was like, but she knew there was no way of questioning him.

She knew the name of his parents, but that was all she knew. Maybe he wanted to study for his Newts. It was a perfectly reasonable explanation. If it wasn't for that fact that Death Eaters didn't require good Newt marks, she thought bitterly to herself.

Hermione was amazed and discouraged by how quick his mind was. His intelligence was undeniable.

He never smiled. Even the most notorious Death Eaters smiled. Severus Snape smiled. Not often but she'd seen it.

And wonder beyond wonder, she had actually gotten quite protective of little Snape. She would rip into anyone she was teasing him. Harry had said something about him having an unpleasant homelife as a child.

Hermione was still struggling with what was going on in this time period. The Slytherins were practically hitting on her. One of them even groped her breast before she slapped him. His look of surprise was surprising to her. How could he look surprised? Something was off. On the whole, the school was well behaved, but sometimes there would be stints of bad behaviour.

She asked Molly about it as tactfully as she could and only got evasive answers and an uncomfortable shuffling of Molly's feet. That told Hermione that there was definitely something going on. She didn't feel comfortable asking Arthur or any of the Professors. Admitting to a Professor that one of the students had felt her up would evoke more drama than she needed, particularly being out of time as she was.

"Some of the Slytherins are acting a bit lewdly towards me." Hermione said to Lucius one night in the library.

He looked up from his book with one eye arched as he did when she would bother him. He watched her for a bit.

"That's because you are a muggleborn." He stated and returned his attention to his book.

"Wha..?" Hermione started in complete confusion. "What does that have to do with anything?"

"You have looser morals." He stated without looking up.

Hermione huffed in indignity. She watched him while he kept on reading. What was that supposed to mean?

"I don't understand." She said.

Lucius looked up like she was annoying him.

"It is well known that muggleborns have looser morals."

"That's ridiculous." Hermione said.

"Respectable girls cannot behave as muggleborns do. Encourage attention. Be generous with their... affections." Lucius said looking her in the eyes.

"Encourage attention?" She said. "Is that what I do?"

“It is your nature.”

Hermione’s eyes widened in shock. He’d basically called her a whore. But unfortunately things clicked into place. Kristy Malcolm put out, when the pureblooded girls didn’t. Hermione realised the pureblooded community was much more conservative, while in the muggle world it was the seventies. Hermione actually forgot her anger for a bit as she revelled in solving a puzzle.

Hermione scrambled to recall what she knew about the seventies. All she could think of was the Vietnam was being over, hippies, free love and porn. Not that she had any experience with any of that, but this was the decade that basically felt it invented sex. Hermione couldn’t help but groan. The sexual revolution had hit the muggle world and the conservative wizard world had noticed.

“I’m not a whore.” She said.

“You are what you are.” He said.

“Fuck you.” Hermione spat before grabbing her bag and storming out.

Hermione ignored Lucius throughout the Christmas holiday. She refused to meet him at their scheduled time and ignored his missives. It wasn’t difficult, he didn’t vary his schedule a great deal. She pretty much knew where he’d be at any one time. She was free to peruse the ground and Hogsmead as she wished. There were none of the heavy security around Hogwarts that was in place in her time. There wasn’t anyone out to kill students. Yet.

She also spent some hours telling Dumbledore all she knew. She asked him what the point was of telling him when he couldn’t change anything. He told her that it would give him twenty five years to think about it. Hermione couldn’t fault the logic, even though she couldn’t understand. Nothing that was happening now was real. The real events of this time had already occurred and they didn’t include her. This was some additional dimension created to deal with her screw up.

Lucius remembered the little episode in the library where he had practically called the mudblood a whore. She swore at him, using language no respectable witch would use. At the time, he saw it as complete justification for what he was saying. It pleased him that he had upset her. He was still smarting from the comments she’d made about his lack of social skills.

He also knew that the morals of this son’s generation were very different, and her being a part of that made her much more ‘modern’ in her outlook than the times of his youth. She was a whore. Relatively. He was pretty certain she wasn’t a virgin. He knew of the closeness between her and the Weasley spawn. And judging from the way they were breeding like rats, restraint was a foreign concept to the Wesleys.

He got no more memories coming for a while. Then some flashes of anger as he was being ignored. He was sitting in his study reading some correspondence a few days later when he started to feel a tingle that told him a new memory was forming. But instead of a clear memory he got a throbbing erection to his complete dismay. It was the quickly forming erection of a teenage boy. Not something a man with control suffered from. The lack of control was embarrassing. And it was obviously something she’d done to him, because it was a memory involving her.

The memories were starting to become clear. He was sitting in potions class. She was sitting on the stool next to him. Slughorn was prattling on about something and the mudblood dropped her quill off the edge of the table. She leaned over to pick it up, using her legs as a counterweight.

In the process, they leaned towards him as she bend her upper body down the far end of the table. Her skirt was sliding up her thighs a bit as she reached down and the creamy white thighs parted a fraction as she was just trying to reach the quill with her fingers.

The sight set of a maelstrom in his teenage mind. He remember the aching erection he got in class, having to rearrange his robes to cover it. She had returned to her notes, completely unaware what she had just done. Done to him.

Lucius was left with the throbbing stiffness as the memories faded. He waited a while but it the ache was unbearable. He didn't know what to do. He considered owling one of his whores, but it would take at least an hour for the woman to turn up. And having the whore turn up to a hard erection didn't suit his sensibilities. He preferred that they make him hard, tease him, begged for it. This was just mortifying.

He decided that he would have to deal with this himself. He couldn't remember the last time he had to do this. He cleared his mind and let it go where ever it wanted as he leaned back in his chair and released the ties on his pants. His mind seemed to go nowhere other than the milky white thighs he'd just seen.

His anger was palpable. Then he had to suffer the indignity when he had to remember his teenage self having to relieve himself in the prefects bathroom to the very same images.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6

Lucius had been a busy man over the last few weeks. He had helped Dumbledore find some of the horcruxes. Voldemort was after all not been overly secret about the places he was particularly guarding. Dumbledore was dying. He was visibly weakening, but seemed to be committed to get the little mudblood back before finally gracing the world with his departure.

Lucius had also managed to get the revolting dog, Fenrir Grey sorted. His inclusion in Voldemort's circle had been Lucius' first major re-think about his loyalty. His existence was unacceptable, spreading disease in the population. Unforgivable. Voldemort enjoyed the brutality and he had no qualms about spreading disease.

Mad-eye Moody sorted the beast in the end. It was rather beautiful in the end. He died like he'd lived. Moody had acquired some muggle technology to enact what was necessary. It was crude but efficient.

New memories from the past had been mercifully few. He got some twinges about his teenage self dealing to his needs first thing in the morning, but nothing to the extent that clear memories were being formed. But it really grated him that the mudblood's inclusion in his life was making sexual relief a much more prominent part of his teenage memories. He was doing his absolute best not to succumb to the base urges, with mixed success.

In fact, he had called for entertainment twice in the last few weeks, which was unheard of. He deplored the baseness of it. He had always felt contempt for his wife as she sought out lover after lover. Her straying from the marriage bed had been open and dramatic in the beginning, although Lucius had felt relief that she was fulfilling her more base needs elsewhere. Over time, she had become less flaunting with her lovers and settled down to respectable discretion. He didn't keep track, but he was under the impression that her latest dalliance had been going for about seven years if not more.

Hermione was actually starting to get settled into her new life. The novelty of it was wearing off and she was starting to see the people around her more in the here and now than as a reflection of what they were to become. It was also kind of nice not having anyone bugging her constantly to copy her work.

The Slytherins were still leering, but what else was to be expected really. But other than that, things were ticking along. The project she was working on with Lucius was actually quite interesting. They got permission to go to the St. Mungos library to further their research.

Professor Slughorn allowed them to use his fireplace. Hermione had never been there, but Lucius seemed to know where it was. She hadn't really noticed at Hogsmead, but the fashion was a little different from her time. The women were more formal. Hermione would not have considered that possible, but seeing how formal they all dressed, she could understand the disapproving looks the elder generation gave her when she showed up in her jeans and sweaters. God, she missed her jeans.

They spent several hours in the library, pulling book after book looking for leads. It was an efficient process and they actually worked well together. She wasn't sure but she had a sneaking suspicion that he was checking her legs out when she was up the ladder retrieving a book high up one of the book shelves. The thought shocked her a bit. Firstly it was Lucius Malfoy and secondly, it just didn't go with his complete efficiency personality.

After going through a whole stack of books on one of the large tables, Hermione felt ready for a break. Her brain was hurting.

"Would you like a drink?" He asked.

"I could use a break." She said, rubbing her temples.

"There is a cafe nearby." He said. "We could go for a little while."

"Sure." Hermione sighed. Some fresh air would do her good.

They walked in silence out of St. Mungos and down the street a bit to a cafe. It was more of a tea house of the ilk of Madam Puddifoot's. He led her to one of the lace covered small tables. It was so small that they would hardly fit their knees under it at the same time, not without touching anyways. Maybe that was the purpose of the small tables.

"We could have just gone to the cafeteria." She said, trying to squeeze into her seat.

Lucius did not say anything and waited to seat himself until she was in place. Hermione recognised the manners, something she was not really used to.

"What would you like?" He said.

"A hot chocolate." She said.

He ordered her hot chocolate and a tea for himself.

The small table did enforce intimacy and Hermione struggled with his closeness. She couldn't help but to catch his scent. Whatever it was, it was expensive. It was subtle and suggestive, only the way expensive colognes were. It was spicy and woody. She caught herself wondering what part of it was him and what part was the cologne. What he would smell like when working up a bit of a sweat. Then rolled her eyes at her own ridiculous thoughts. Not thoughts she should be having about him, and besides, its doubtful he had ever in his life worked up a... Ok, stop it, she told herself.

He did look a bit uncomfortable. Should teach him right for bringing her to a place like this, she thought, what was he thinking.

He seemed to want to say something, but wasn't. The drinks came and Hermione warmed her hands on the side of the cup while letting the drink cool down a bit.

"The research seems to be going well." She said, getting uncomfortable with the silence.

"Yes."

"Some interesting leads." She continued.

He nodded.

“Another couple of hours and we’ll just about have stripped St. Mungos for all the information it will give us.” Hermione said.

Lucius didn’t answer.

“We could of course start looking at related topics which would open up whole new sections.”

“It may not be a good use of our time.” He finally said.

It was silent for a little longer.

“Would you be amenable to go to Hogsmead with me this weekend?” Lucius said.

Hermione choked on her hot chocolate. It was a question she had heard from quite a few Slytherins in the last month. She hadn’t expected it from him.

“No.” She said when her windpipe was clear.

She could see the muscle in his jaw working.

“I don’t think that would be a good idea.” She continued, trying to soften the bluntness.

“I am from a well respected and powerful family.” He said.

Hermione could feel the heat building in her cheeks. She was so entirely uncomfortable right now, she couldn’t think she’d ever had a more awkward moment.

“I can be a useful ally for you in the future.” He stated.

The ridiculousness of the situation was mingled with the serious undertones of what he was unwittingly saying. It was an absurd suggestion on so many levels, Hermione couldn’t even pull the various reasons apart, it was just a big clump of gag worthy ‘hell no’. Starting with the fact that this was the man that was tried to kill her at the Department of Mysteries last year.

But the thought that he had at least at one time been open to a dalliance with someone like her was intriguing as Draco was programmed to balk at even being in the same room.

Hermione thanked the stars that time could not be changed, otherwise she would seriously have to consider it. Dumbledore would never encourage her to form such an alliance to influence one of the inner circle Death Eaters, but others would. That was if time could be influenced, which thank heaven it can’t. What would Harry say? What would Cedric Diggory’s father say?

A bit for flirting and kissing in dark corners. She could not live with herself if she had the influence over Cedric’s fate and not exercise it. But luckily she didn’t have that kind of influence, which was good because the Slytherins had more in mind than kissing and canoodling.

“I don’t go to Hogsmead with boys.” She stated. “I am not that kind of girl.”

Technically she’d gone with boys to Hogsmead on every trip, but it Harry and Ron, and that was not the kind of trip with boys that was being discussed here.

“But you’re a mudblood.” He said.

Hermione felt the steam well up in her. "That doesn't mean I don't have respect for myself." She yelled. "You're not that special, you know. None of you. You think that I would be impressed because you think you are so much better than me and I would swoon because you daign to give me some attention. Screw you. All of you. You make me sick." She said and stormed out of the cafe.

She marched back to St. Mungos, grabbed her bag and flooed back to Hogwarts. It actually took two hours of strait pacing to vent the anger out.

She was still angry the next day and didn't make eye contact with Lucius all throughout the Potions lesson. She also ignored their research session for three days. When she went back, it was all business. To her relief, Lucius went along with it and did not mention the incident.

A couple of weeks went past in a similar fashion. The school was getting excited as there was a ball coming up. Hermione cringed as five Slytherins asked her to go with them. She started hiding out in the Gryffindor common room every spare minute she had to avoid them.

"Hey Hermione." Arthur said sitting down next to her on the couch after dinner one evening.

"Hi Arthur." She said, glad to see him. "How are you?"

"Good. And yourself?" He said, giving her the look she knew so well from Ron. Arthur was much sweeter than Ron. 'I was wondering.' He continued. "There is a ball coming up..."

Hermione felt dread creeping up her spine. No, no, no, she repeated to herself. Arthur was going to ask her to the ball. Not for the same reasons that the Slytherins, but because he liked her.

"I was wondering if you wanted to go with me." He rushed out.

He was obviously nervous. Truthfully Hermione wouldn't mind going with him because he was like Ron without the annoying bits, but Molly would be crushed. Not to mention Ron if he'd find out.

"I'm sorry Arthur." She said. "Someone has already asked me."

She was lying, but she didn't want him to think she was blowing him off because she could not consider going with him. She could see the disappointment in his face. Better he think that he was just too late.

"I think Molly is still unattached." She tried.

"Really?" He said. "Do you think she would consider going with me?"

"I think she might be open to considering it."

"Oh, ok." He said and left.

He obviously asked Molly because Molly was practically bouncing off the walls when Hermione next saw her.

"You're going with me to the ball." Hermione said to Lucius when she got to the library.

He looked up from his book. There was a brief surprise look on his face for a second.

"I suppose I could be imposed upon." He said sounding bored.

"I'm not sleeping with you." She stated as matter of factly as she could.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Lucius could not believe that he had agreed to take the mudblood to the Ball. Although he knew full well why he had. Mudbloods meant sex in those times and even if she wouldn't, as she said, everyone would think that he was. What people thought wasn't upmost in his mind, but what would it hurt if people thought he was getting some.

He had some very mixed emotions about it. The sheer level of wanking going on proved that her presence had initiated a higher level of sexuality into his youth, of which he wasn't entirely sure he approved. It was of course inevitable that she would sleep with him. His attractiveness to the opposite sex was undeniable and although she might fight her attraction, its existence was beyond dispute. A Malfoy being attractive to women was just a fact of life.

The memories were distracting. His plans for the demise of Voldemort were coming along slowly. Dumbledore and his crew were holed up and Hogwarts and Voldemort was metaphorically pacing outside the gates.

Lucius had agreed with the Order of the Phoenix that he would take care of Nagini, which Dumbledore believed was a Horcrux. Lucius wasn't sure but anything to weaken Voldemort helped. Lucius knew that he had qualms about killing, but snakes he could happily dispatch. He had also managed to upset the Giants through some back handed dealing, so they had packed up and left. Voldemort's fury at their desertion had caused the death of three Death Eaters, further weakening his own side.

The final showdown between Dumbledore and Voldemort was falling into place. Dumbledore was still in his weakening state, which made him rely to the Potter boy more than was ideal. Setting up a teenager against a powerful, albeit mad wizard, was not the best possible solution. Snape would do his part.

More importantly was the planning for life after Voldemort. The world that was there for the taking. Dumbledore would likely succumb during the battle. The current Minister was a wreck that had lost the confidence of the people, after having exiled all capable people that would possibly challenge his position. The Ministry was run by sycophants and idiots. Percy Weasley had been promoted to an undersecretary and was proof enough that the Ministry was entirely rudderless.

Lucius had already started sowing the seeds of his future. When it came time to act, it would be a stitch up.

Hermione had to transfigure a dress for the Ball. The buzz leading up to a ball was exactly the same as it was in the future. There were infinite amounts of trying on dresses at Hogsmead, talking about hair styles and cosmetic products. There were a few raised eyebrows at the idea of her going with Lucius Malfoy. From her most of all. She would never live this down if anyone found out. She hoped like hell no one would actually remember that

the strange new girl went to the ball with Lucius Malfoy, although she recognised that there might be a chance that Lucius himself might remember.

Hermione was pretty certain that he would not mention it if he did remember. Knowing what she knew of him, he would likely not be pleased. The perverse thought made her smile a little. The idea that she could deal with him in a way that was abhorrent to him as an older man. He probably wouldn't remember. Surely forty something year olds do not remember their dates to minor balls. After all, he'd had at least ten already.

It took her ages to transfigure a dress that she was pretty pleased with. It was blue and silver. She had managed to get the colours to fade into each other rather nicely. Molly had spent ages trying to tame Hermione's hair and there was now some semblance of order to it.

She tried to imagine what Lucius would look like in his dress robes. Probably stunning.

She was right. He did look stunning. The robes were obviously tailored to his form. It made his shoulders look broad and his waist look trim. Long legs with muscles in the right places. There was the edge of forbidding in the way he dressed. The austere black against the soft blond hair and pale skin.

"Your dress is flattering." He said when she took his arm.

"Thank you." She said, noting the complement for the garment instead of her. Perhaps she was just over sensitive. She wondered how long she would have to stay at the ball. She was actually dreading it now.

The Great Hall was beautifully decorated. It never ceased to amaze her when the Great Hall was dressed to impress. Lucius led her across the room at a leisurely pace. She could feel the heat of his body through the material of his sleeve.

Hermione was having some major reservations about having to spend the evening with him. What if someone found out that while she was gone, she'd gone on a date with Lucius Malfoy. There were a whole group of people who would likely never forgive her. But when she saw Molly and Arthur, her actions seemed a lot more justified. Molly was literally beaming. Arthur looked like he was wearing the same robes that Ron had to the Triwizard Tournament Ball. But he didn't seem to care and he was smiling down at Molly, who looked adorable with her hair done in ringlets.

But Lucius led her past the spot where all the Gryffindors were towards the back where all the Slytherins were. She hadn't quite anticipated this. Hermione started getting a sinking feeling every step she made. She was basically being led into the Death Eater inner circle.

Rudolpho LeStrange was there with his muggleborn girlfriend, also present were some of the other main Death Eaters, Dolohov, Nott, Flint, Parkinson, and a range of others. Bellatrix Black was there too.

Bellatrix was alone and when she was questioned about her lack of date, she said that there was no one man enough to take her. She was staring daggers at Kristy, and Hermione got the same look when Lucius introduced her.

The boys in the group had all had their turn hitting on her in the past, so they were all obviously making some assumptions about what she and Lucius were getting up to during those evenings they were spending in the library. Hermione wanted to throw up.

What seemed like an easy way of not hurting Arthurs feeling had turned into hell.

"I am going to get a drink." Hermione said, glad to find an excuse to get away. She made to pull away, but Lucius squeezed her wrist between his elbow and side. Hermione gave him a questioning look.

"Anything you might need, I will provide." He said.

"How very..." Hermione struggled for a word. Chivalrous? Insulting? Patronising?

"Customary." He filled in for her, giving her one of his arched eyebrow looks.

He led her towards to table where all the drinks were kept.

"I see that I will have to educate you on proper behaviour." He said as he led her through the crowd.

"I am not incapable of getting myself a drink." Hermione said through gritted teeth.

"As your escort, it is my duty to see to your needs."

"I am perfectly capable of doing that for myself." She said.

"Irrelevant." He stated. "What kind of manners do they teach you in the muggle world?"

"Not the kind where you need a man for anything." Hermione shot back, annoyed.

"What a ridiculous notion." Lucius said and scooped some punch into a crystal cup.

Just as he finished, Kristy took the ladle off him and scooped herself a drink. Hermione turned and noticed that Rudolpho was still standing with the Slytherin inner circle. Hermione gave Lucius an arched eyebrow look of her own.

"The trick to good manners is not to treat someone as beneath you even though they are." He said, eyeing Kristy as she returned with her drink to Rudolpho's side.

Hermione knew that she should be getting upset, but the absurdity of the situation left her stunned, even chuckling a bit. Lucius belief in curtesy to those below him would certainly change over the coming years. In fact, there probably wasn't anyone he didn't deem below him and seemed more than willing to show it.

"And I am below you?" She asked.

"The circumstances of your birth makes that so." He stated matter of factly.

"So why did you agree to escort me this evening, if I am so below you?" She challenged. She knew full well why Slytherins hung out with girls like her. She just wanted to know if he'd own up to it.

"In light of us being dependent on a well functioning relationship to succeed at our potions project, it seemed the right course of action to accept your invitation." He said. "Unusual as it was."

Quite the diplomat, Hermione said under her breath.

"So your idea of good manners," She said, "as we have established that the concept is radically different where I am from, is that you will never leave my side?"

“Correct.”

“Excellent.” She responded with dubiousness. “And I can’t dance with anyone else?”

“Certainly not.”

“Even better.” She said dryly. “I get to have you all to myself.”

Lucius gave her a pondering look. Hermione decided to check the sarcasm.

The dancing started and Lucius led her onto the dance floor. It was a waltz. Hermione could feel every nuance of pressure as he put his hand on her back. His other hand was warm as he held hers. Meanwhile, she had to put her other hand on his shoulder. He was firm under her hand and Hermione couldn’t help but blush at the intimacy, even though it wasn’t really much intimacy.

He kept a proper distance between them, but he was still close. His face was closer than she had ever seen it. She couldn’t deny how attractive he was. His features were beautiful but still masculine. The hair was perfect. Full lips. Warm body. A wayward thought wondered what it would feel like if he pulled her close.

“I need some air.” She said deciding that such intimacy was not good.

Lucius stopped and led her outside into the courtyard. Hermione walked ahead of him down the courtyard corridors and Lucius followed behind. She wasn’t doing a good job of escaping him, which had been the intention of getting out of the dancing.

She finally stopped at one of the windows with views over the valley below.

“It was just getting a bit stuffy inside.” She justified.

He didn’t answer, but stood next to her.

Hermione was struggling with herself a bit, chiding herself for having thoughts squeezing up against Lucius Malfoy. She could still feel the imprint of his hand on her back. She couldn’t actually be attracted to Lucius Malfoy, could she? Of all the ridiculous notions that could enter her head. Attracted to the arrogant, chauvinistic, Death Eater to be. A man she despised for close to half of her life.

“You are cold.” He said and was unbuttoning his dress robes.

Hermione watch as he popped each button of his robes with his long pale fingers. A sight of him taking clothes off was not what she needed at the moment.

“I’m fine. Really.” She protested, but he didn’t stop. He took off the robe and put it around her shoulders, standing close to her as he reached the robes around her shoulders. The woody spicy smell of him enveloped her and it smelled really, really good. A kind of ‘now I want to taste’ good.

He was still standing really close, his face close to her. He had that look. The look boys get when they want to be kissed.

“I feel much better.” Hermione stammered. “Lets get back to the dancing. I could really use another glass of punch. Actually I need to go to the ladies, and then another glass of punch. Then we can dance. Something quick with a bit of a beat to it.”

She was blabbering, but her mind was on panic mode and the alarms in her head were all going off. As before, he followed her as she walked purposefully back towards the Great Hall, pulling off his robes and laying it across her arm in the process. That stupid smell seemed to have soaked into her clothes because it lingered. Damn those expensive colognes.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8

The rest of the ball was awful. Hermione was hyperaware of Lucius. She persevered though until the first students started to leave. She didn't want to be the first for some reason, but she didn't mind being the second.

She claimed she had a headache. She took the initiative and kissed him on the cheek before running off. She thought that was a much better idea than him kissing her, because she suspected that he would do it properly and there were just some things you didn't need to know about your enemy. Goodnight kisses was one of them.

All the same, she did notice how soft and warm his skin was. She had always known it looked perfect, but now she knew it really was. Part of her really wanted to know what it was like to kiss him, but she knew better.

She had to get this line of thinking out of her head. She transfigured the dress back and got into her PJs and waited until the others got back.

Hermione was asleep when Molly got back, but Molly was not the most quiet of creatures, particularly after having had the night of her life. Apparently Arthur had danced with her all night and then kissed her goodnight. A kiss which Hermione was treated with every minor detail. A few months ago that would have been too much information about Ron's parents, but she had started seeing Molly and Arthur for their own right.

The next week was a little subdued. Hermione set anyone straight who thought that she and Lucius were a couple, but what did it matter. Who was going to remember gossip in the future anyway?

Lucius was back to his usual self, which was a relief. They studied together in the evenings and had potions class together. The events, or near misses at the dance were not mentioned.

Apparently Bellatrix and Kristy had gotten into an altercation later in the evening and both had been given detentions for a whole month. Bellatrix was obviously jealous, but she still treated Rudolphus like dirt.

Hermione and Lucius' project was now starting the phase where they needed to interview people. It was a task that Hermione had to take over after Lucius first tried to interview an elderly retired healer. That had quickly devolved into forced silences and increased suspicion. At one point, Hermione even had to interject and explain that what Lucius meant to say was that it must have been difficult being a female in a male orientated profession and that he wasn't making assertions on her capability of doing the work to an excellent standard.

Although the crook in his eyebrow told her that maybe that is exactly what he meant.

"Honesty is not always the best policy." Hermione said when they were leaving the elderly witches house. "There are just some suspicions that don't need to be voiced."

“How can we believe anything she says if she was not capable of doing the job?”

“You don’t know that.” Hermione said exasperated. “How can you make a snap judgement based on five minutes of conversation?”

“Easily.” He said. “I am sure the others will corroborate it as we interview others.”

“Those kinds of attitudes bias everything you hear.” Hermione tried to explain. “If you have an idea set in your head, then you will take everything you hear as corroboration or lack of it for your idea, not for what the person is actually saying. Maybe you should just take notes from now on.”

The demotion made Lucius huff, but he didn’t complain. It was painfully obvious that he didn’t like dealing with people.

Over the next week they interviewed close to 30 people.

Lucius hadn’t had time to pay attention to the memories coming through. He clearly remembered the ball. He would never have thought that a mudblood would scrub up like Hermione had. She looked stunning and the dress revealed all the curves that the school robes hid. He remembered the feel of her underneath his hands and the smell of her hair.

Somehow the memories were starting to make him feel a little nauseous and he had tried to block them out of his mind. Some of the more active ones woke him up early in the morning and by saying woke him it that meant on more than one level.

But the plans were proceeding now. Everything was set and the ball had started rolling. Lucius was a little disturbed when the final showdown seemed to be moving towards the school. He would have preferred somewhere else. Somewhere away from his son’s school, but he didn’t seem to be able to shift the course of events.

Dumbledore was more than well forearmed. Enough to ensure the children were out of the way. Lucius had been reassured that Draco was well out of harms way.

The day of the showdown arrived on a dark and windy Tuesday. The kind of day where no one goes outside. Freezing wind ripped through their robes and the wet made them heavy and uncomfortable.

Voldemort had gathered all of his followers to him and they were about to seize the Hogwarts walls. They could see all sorts of activity inside. Voldemort wasn’t so stupid that he didn’t realise that they were expected, but he was arrogant enough to believe that it was irrelevant.

Lucius did his part and killed the snake, which in the process revealed his supposed true allegiance. The battle proceeded. Voldemort’s true followers fought valiantly, but they were surprisingly few when it came down to it. This was a fight between Voldemort and Dumbledore, and it soon devolved into that. Dumbledore was weakening quickly, but Potter was filling behind him. Even in his reduced state he managed to weaken Voldemort.

By the time Dumbledore succumbed, Voldemort was exhausted and Potter had the advantage of youth and his blinding fury. The end was quick and neither of them got up after.

Lucius retreated home as soon as it was over. He didn’t want to deal with the aftermath. The Weasleys had lost of their sons and as much as he despised them, he could sympathise.

He knew that losing his son would be the only thing that would undo him.

It had been an awful day, but it had been necessary. Draco was nice and safe in his bedroom and Voldemort was truly dead. So was the Potter boy, but there was nothing that could be done about that. His involvement in the destruction of the Dark Lord had been prophesised after all.

For the first time, Lucius was glad that the infernal memories from the misplaced mudblood could distract him. Instead of repressing the memories, he let them flow. He watched as she teased some of the first year Gryffindors in the Great Hall.

She was smiling and laughing. It seemed to infect everyone around her. Completely unaware that her best friend had died today. He bet her eyes would not be shining like that when she found out. He could imagine her eyes and face succumbing to the grief. It was uncomfortable being aware of someone's future.

If he really embraced the memories he could hear, taste and listen to the bustle of activity in the Great Hall. It had been the centre of the universe for a duration in his life. He could hear his housemates around him, eating and chatting. Voices that were so young and innocent. He could feel the cold metal of the fork in his hands.

But the mudblood kept his attention. She was pretty. Lively. Young. All the things he hadn't been in a really long time. And still there was that nauseous feeling whenever he saw her. He dismissed it as a consequence of her blood status.

He met her again in the library later that evening. She was writing on some parchment and was chewing on her knuckle every time she was thinking of what to write.

She told him off, which no one ever did. She had told him off for being insensitive. He wasn't entirely sure what she was on about, probably some muggle concept.

Hermione tried to avoid looking at Lucius, because inevitably he would look up and there would be his eyes. They just sucked her attention to them. And where the eyes were, the lips were. Hermione could drown in those eyes. She'd never realised eyes could have such a pull.

Hermione had to admit, she had developed a wee bit of an infatuation with Lucius Malfoy. It was an utterly ridiculous notion, but it had happened somehow. He was undeniably beautiful and Hermione recognised that she must just be a sucker for a pretty face, because what else could explain her little crush. It was so ridiculous, she just had to smile to herself as she sat across the library table from him.

"Why are you smiling?" He asked.

Hermione blushed when she realised that she had been caught.

"I was just thinking about something that happened earlier."

"In the Great Hall?"

"Yes." Hermione lied. "Why do you ask?"

"No reason." He said. "Have you completed the transcription of the last set of interviews?"

"Just about."

“We had better get on with the mapping of the ingredient supply locations.” He said. “I have drawn up a map of the British Isles here and have started mapping the locations of the more promising ingredients.”

He shoved the map towards her and stood up for lean over it. Hermione stood as well to see what he wanted to show her. Their heads were close and Hermione did her very best to focus on the parchment underneath her.

“I think we should try this location first. It has a few of the ingredients nearby.” He said and pointed to a location somewhere in Cornwall. “This is Shermerts forest. Have you been there before?”

Hermione shook her head.

“Perhaps we should go next week.”

“Ok.” Hermione agreed. “How long do you think it will take?”

“Maybe four hours. We should go in the morning and bring lunch in case. The Whittlewort plant can be tricky to find, I understand.”

He smelled divine, but Hermione was not going to look up from the parchment. He was so close. Too close. She could hear his breath. She couldn’t count the categories of stupid she was falling into. Maybe it was the temptation of the forbidden, because if there was anyone who was forbidden, it was Lucius Malfoy.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9

Hermione was actually quite embarrassed that she had developed a bit of a crush on Lucius Malfoy. It was starting to really piss her off whenever someone assumed they were a couple, because it was not a concept she needed to be reminded of every five minutes. She could kind of see the dark humour of it. She could imagine the shocked expression on Lupin and Moody's faces at the idea that she thought Lucius Malfoy was rather attractive. Well, his younger self before evil well and truly set in, in a kind of anally retentive way. It takes a certain kind of girl to appreciate that. And Hermione had to admit that she was perhaps such a kind.

Not that she would ever act upon it. Let's not forget who we're dealing with. He shone like a beacon in the Great Hall. He had absolutely beautiful hands. Strong and straight. She couldn't help but to watch them as he scribbled on his parchment in the library. The absolute worst was when he was deep in thought. Then he would sometimes run the end of his quill along his bottom lip and it would make Hermione slightly loose grip on reality for a short second.

She had never been in a state of crush like this before, to the point where she would involuntarily watch someone. She had never watch Ron this way. When they were getting together, Hermione's stomach would flip when he grabbed her close, but she was never compelled to watch him. That was because she'd loved Ron, she determined, and this was a silly teenage crush on someone pretty. She would die of mortification if Lucius Malfoy the Death Eater knew that she thought he was pretty. She clung to the insult of calling him pretty like a lifesaver. No man wanted to be thought of as pretty, it was an entirely feminine concept.

Lucius was very busy over the next few days. The future needed to be secured and it required a great deal of manoeuvring and negotiation, and time was of the essence. Annoying he had to deal with the infernal memories throughout, distracting him. And they weren't even important like the mudblood accidentally flashing her milky thighs, they were stupid things like her talking to the waste of magic that was Arthur Weasley, or the mudblood walking around the lake in the evening. He seemed to watch her do everything. He had to seriously consider that his teenage self had some stalking tendencies.

He tried to suppress the memories as much as possible and on the whole he managed to function fine. The mornings were the worst, where his teenage self would imagine exactly what he wanted to do to her, but those thoughts lead to their conclusion rather quickly. He tried to detach himself from the urges coming through, but it left him edgy and cranky throughout the day, not something he needed at the moment as his charm offensive needed to be on full tilt to achieve what he wanted. It was just easier to succumb to it.

A new Minister was being selected and he needed to make sure that his candidate was chosen. He had pretty much established the lay of the land and knew where he needed to apply pressure now. He had spent the last week securing the support of the prominent and

influential families and he was now close to achieving a majority for his candidate. But there were a few swing votes that he needed to focus on over the next week to ensure victory.

Snape was mourning Dumbledore's death and was of no use at all. Not that he was of any use generally when it came to political manoeuvring. The man was as subtle as a dragon in a potions shop. The general populace was distracted with mourning the old codger and the Potter boy, which was the perfect opportunity to do the required work.

The order of the day was to convince a Mr. Bellington that he should drop his objections to a project his candidate had been responsible for a number of years back. This Mr. Bellington, a man who descended from a mudblood infiltrator four generations back. Lucius fully believed the bad blood stuck through at least eight generations. Once eight generations had passed, the bad blood could conceivably been seen as having been washed out. Anything less than that and they could have stepped fresh of the muggle streets, awestruck with their ridiculous muggle parents in tow.

He knew in his teenage world, he was walking around a forest somewhere with the mudblood. It was a beautiful day and if he didn't have so much to do, he might sit down and enjoy the spring sunshine on his face.

Mr. Bellington was a greedy pig of a man. In the end, Lucius had to part with a sum of two thousand galleons to make the wretched man drop his objections. Lucius had an urge to count his fingers after shaking the man's hand to make sure they were all still there.

To get the bad taste out of his mouth, he met up with Abratius Flint at one of the better Diagon Alley pubs. A nice aged Whiskey was in order to settle his stomach, which had been unsettled for a couple of weeks now. Abratius wasn't exactly mourning the Dark Lord, who could, other than his barmy sister in law's posy who were currently safely stashed in Azkaban. But Abratius was concerned about the future and seemed to take comfort in Lucius communication that the future is likely bright. Lucius liked that the old families would implicitly take his word. They weren't Gryffindors, trust was a foreign concept, but the families did trust him when he said he had it all in hand.

The sedate environment of the pub and Abratius incessant babbling was making Lucius relax somewhat. Before he could stop it, new memories were flooding his brain. The mudblood picking herbs and flowers in a sunlit meadow. She was wearing a white dress and some hideous cardigan over it. When the light hit it right, he would see the outline of her thighs through the material of the dress. He seemed to be watching her more than he was picking ingredients.

Lucius wanted to smack the boy and tell him to keep his mind on the required task or he'd be there all day. Lucius said goodbye to Abratius after agreeing to come to dinner at their home in a few hours. When Lucius got back to his study, he inquired to see if his wife was in the country at the moment and heard that she was in Italy and had been there for seven weeks. And Draco was off with his friends somewhere in the Caribbean. On learning this news, he sent an owl along to Abratius to inform him that he would be joining them alone.

Lucius sat down to read some correspondence. His teenage self was busy watching the mudblood eating a sandwich. He was utterly embarrassed at how ridiculous his teenage self was. Watching a mudblood eat, for Merlin's sake.

Later when he was posting his correspondence, he was following the mudblood down a path deeper in the forest. The sunlight didn't reach down through the forest canopy. Lucius indulged in a fantasy of leading the mudblood into the forest to murder her. Not that he was a murderer, he was a member of the Order of the Phoenix, and it was well publicised, but he could indulge in a fantasy. Wringing her little neck. Maybe in the little abandoned cottage they just passed.

He had to admit that the backside he had so intently been watching for the last half hours walk was rather nice. Shapely. Obviously a girl who was more physically active than your typical witch. Before he could help himself he wondered what it would feel like to grab that backside to get good leverage. He narrowed his eyes and cursed.

The memories were really annoying him now and he went upstairs to dress for dinner. He checked himself in the mirror. He looked perfect, flawless, forbidding. The mudblood wouldn't be smiling at him sweetly if she saw him now.

Dinner was a typical affair. The conversation was filled with politics and the future. A thing he loved about Slytherins is that they wasted no time on the past. They were extremely sentimental about their history and traditions, but when a change occurred, they had no qualms about cutting lose the past and ensuring the future. An admirable trait.

The food was up to standard, he wouldn't have come if it were anything less. He suppress the memories fairly well, but he got a flash of concern, which made him pay attention. It had gotten really dark and his teenage self had just noticed a flash of lighting, which meant they couldn't apparate.

He watched as the stupid mudblood suggested that they leave and him having to inform her that the storm was too close. Really, even after seven years of schooling, the mudblood didn't know when it was safe to apparate. An electrical storm was not one of those times as powerful magic such as apparating attracted the lightning. He watched as fat raindrops started to fall on their heads.

The rain came quickly. They ran back to the cottage. He had taken her hand and they were running as the heavens opened up. The lightning flashed above the tree canopies. Under trees was not the best place to be during a thunder storm. Lucius enjoyed the feel of running. As a grown man, he didn't run. It was beneath him, but he enjoyed his teenage body running through the forest. The feeling of freedom.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10

Lucius was finishing desert at the Flint's house as his teenage self and the mudblood reached the cottage. It was locked and they talked about if it was safe to unlock it with magic. The mudblood suggested that they take the chance just after lightning had struck as the energy would be discharged. Lucius didn't think it was a full proof theory, but his younger self seemed more prone to try. The thunder rolled through the sky as he unlocked the door to the small cottage.

A cottage was a bit of a misnomer, it was more like a room. The mudblood seemed to think it was a hunting lodge that hadn't been used for quite a while. He had to agree it was better than standing out in the rain, but not by much.

Lucius tried to focus on the conversation around the dinner table, but somehow the intensity of the memories were at a peak. They were dripping wet and Lucius could feel the uncomfortable wet cold on his skin. It wasn't outright cold because they were still warm from running, but it was still an uncomfortable feeling.

The mudblood threw off her sopping wet cardigan and stood in the centre of the room. Her white dress was soaked through, leaving very little of her curves to the imagination. Lucius had never seen such a sight. She was looking at him and she was still breathing heavy.

Lucius was fairly proud that he was not an experienced man when it came to baser instincts, although he had gone through a period lately where it had been more evident that he had a baser side, but instinctively he knew the look on the mudbloods face. It was not a look he wanted to see, wanted in his brain. It was a look that filled his body with adrenalin, whether he liked it or not. He was not in control now, his hormone added teenage brain was in control. And his entire body was tightening.

He was kissing her now, passionately, with everything he had. Lucius stood up so sharply he knocked the chair over. The sudden movement seemed to jolt the other diners.

"I have to go." He said.

"But we still have the port."

"I'm sorry. I... I... I have to go." Lucius said and apparated from the spot.

Luckily his robes hid quite well his embarrassment. His body was flooding with sensation as he got back to his study. He couldn't even make a dent in the sensation through trying to suppress it. His body was on fire and he could feel the mudbloods firm flesh under his hands. And she was yielding completely. Whore, his mind screamed.

As much as he fought it, the pleasure he was feeling was undeniable. Her mouth was so sweet. His tongue was caressing hers and he didn't care if it was messy. He didn't care about the sounds or the wetness, he just needed more. He could feel her pressed against his chest,

her hips against his. He was molding her to him. Her leg was coming up his thigh and he could feel her opening her hips to let him in closer. Flush against his hardness.

He couldn't help the groan that slipped past his lips. It had never been like this. With the disgusting whore when he was sixteen or his wife. The need had never been there, not like this, driving him. It had always been something carefully controlled.

He was on his knees on the floor and she was straddling him. He was kissing the material covering her breasts and she had her hands in his hair. Her breath was deep and fast. He could hear it in his ear as she pulled his head closer to her.

Her backside was glorious as he grabbed it to grind her to him, to his hardness. It was the most glorious feeling, pure need. He tried to undo the buttons on her dress, but it couldn't get his fingers to work. In the end he tore them out. With the buttons out of the way, they got her wet dress off her and the bra soon followed. She arched back and her perfect breast were just by his mouth. He took one of them in his mouth and savoured the silky feel of the firm, round mound. He could hear her groan and she was pressing her hips against him in her need.

"Lucius." She said in a strained voice. "Please."

He laid her body down on the small rug and struggled to get his own shirt off. With enough force it gave away and his body sang with sensation as he felt her heated skin on his. Her body cushioned his as he lay down on her. She had taken off her underwear and she was completely naked underneath him.

Lucius had never felt such a feeling of irrational victory in all his life. He had savoured many victories, but this was a complete celebration.

She was grinding her hips against him and her lips were desperately seeking his.

"Now." She whispered.

Lucius undid his belt and freed himself from the confines of his pants. The sensation as he sunk into her was mindblowing. His entire body hummed with pleasure and the feeling of completeness was palpable on his tongue when he sank down to the hilt. He wanted to stay here forever. He felt like every wound he ever had was healed.

He pulled out slightly, but the sensation was overwhelming. Sinking back down was heaven and she groaned loudly as he hit the point of completely filling her. A repeat and the sensation was only getting more intense.

"Oh God." She yelled and was grinding herself even harder to him, groaning with every breath. All his sensations were now flooding inwards towards his middle as he was about to come. He could feel her convulsing around his and he came with an explosion of sensation that completely robbed him of breath and vision. That was alright, he didn't need air. He had everything he needed in that moment already.

He felt like a god. That is what she had said, a god. He was lying on her, still inside her, just feeling her body underneath him. He was utterly spent. The urge to sleep was strong. Fall asleep in heaven, safe and free.

As the assault of sensation retreated, Lucius found himself on the floor in front of his favourite chair. He was in shock as he looked around the room. He found his wand and

cleaned up the mess that resulted. He wasn't sure what had just happened. Maybe the fact that it was a remote memory made it much more intense, but this was not in accordance with his experience. Sex was never this intense. He had to sleep. Whatever had just happened, he would figure it out after he'd had some sleep.

Hermione had to wake Lucius to get him to roll off her. Having him on her was nice but it was making it increasingly hard to breath. Reality was slowly returning and Hermione could not believe what she had just done. She had just fucked Lucius Malfoy. A perverse part of her wanted to laugh, but her analytical mind was more stunned and concerned about the implications.

There were none, she kept on telling herself. This is the past, nothing changes the future. Although saying that, she realised with a cringe that Lucius the Death Eater may well remember that he dipped his wick in the enemy camp. She got up off the floor.

He was watching her now. She was standing in the middle of the room using her wand to dry her dress. Lucius was still on the rug, looking like the cat that got the cream. He was smiling up at her. He looked gorgeous lying there, perched on his elbow, flushed with his hair a bit tousled.

"You don't have to look so pleased." She said, trying not to smile.

"Why not? I am pleased." He said in a hoarse voice.

Hermione couldn't really hold the smile in any more. He was utterly gorgeous and she had just come harder than she ever had. There had practically been no foreplay, it was just 'fuck me now', and it had been absolutely divine. Her body was still tingling with the after effects. She had never been hot for a guy like that before. She couldn't even remember how it started, one instance they were inside and the next they were all over each other.

He probably won't remember, Hermione told herself, surely he got laid all the time. Look at him, completely irresistible. Surely she would just be one in a string of girls who succumbed to his charms. He probably won't remember one spectacular episode on a field trip into the woods.

Hermione watched as he got up and lit a fire. His shirt was still off and Hermione couldn't help but feel little flushes of heat that had absolutely nothing to do with the fire he was nurturing.

"How long do you think the storm will last?" She asked.

"Hours." He said and looked back at her. "I wonder what we'll do to while the time away?"

Hermione had to chew her lip to stop herself from smiling again, but lost the battle when he came up behind her and snaked his arms around her waist. Hermione felt her stomach somersault as he pulled her back towards him. He was kissing her neck and shoulder. She couldn't help a shuttering breath as he started playing with the strap of the bra she had just put on. Kissing along the line as he gently moved the strap over her shoulder. Occasionally she would feel his warm tongue taste her skin and it gave her goosebumps.

It felt so good to be that close. Felt so right considering it was all so very, very wrong. But a deep kiss seemed to wipe away any justification or lack of it for what was happening.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11

The mudblood was starting to affect his ability to function. He was having to start restricting his movements, particularly in the evenings when they would spend time in the library flirting, teasing and would invariably end up with them in a dark corner fucking each others' brains out. A part where he by necessity needed to be alone, but even before that, as soon as they were in a room together the possibility of getting a hard on instantaneously was ever present. It put a bit of a dent on his social calendar. Social is a misrepresentation, the execution of scheming would be a better phrase.

Something he found increasingly hard to do as his brains is constantly flooded with images of her. And then that awful nauseous feeling that has now reverted to insidious when she was not around. Mostly there weren't memories when she wasn't present, but the sick feeling was constant until she appears. He could even feel the anticipation of her appearance before the memories came. Seeing her flooded his brain with pleasure, but the tension only builds until he'd find his release in her later in the evening.

The constant tension was becoming untenable, like a pinch in the spine and nothing he did would release it until he could sate it in her. Dreamless sleep potion worked, but it would require him to go to bed at 8. The memories still flooded in when he woke up.

He could not understand why anyone would choose to have relations like this. It was completely unbearable and he could sympathise with people who said love drove them insane. Not that he believed in love, but lust, he could fully recognise that lust was driving his teenage mind to complete distraction. He had thought people were making pitiful excuses for their weaknesses, but he would be a little more tolerant now.

Once he had managed to rid himself of this unfortunate affliction, he was never going to feel lust again. A whore working her tricks once in a while to relieve a bit of tension maybe, like it used to be, but this obsessive lust. Never again.

Although saying that, out of sheer desperation he would take the release that the mudbloods body offered him after a long day of aching need. He felt a tangible relief as his teenage self was leading them to their favourite dark corner in the restricted section. Because it indicated a respite even if only temporary.

Hermione had stopped thinking about the right and the wrong with regards to what she was doing. She couldn't stop. He looked at her and she would feel heat growing in her belly. It was disturbing how much she wanted him.

So maybe the little crush had developed into more of a complete adoration thing. With him a bit more relaxed, he was a lot more fun. His intelligence, acerbic wit and dry sense of humour kept her smiling throughout the day. And when he got that glint in his eye, she would just melt. And the way he filled her...

This is not the man she'd met, this was someone else and it broke her heart that this person wouldn't survive the coming years. On a more abstract level, it made him uniquely hers because the boy she knew and adored only existed here.

Thinking about the future was painful, so she only focused on the present.

They were planning another little field trip to gather ingredients for the project, probably their last. Hermione couldn't wait. Time alone with him, unhurried and secluded, she couldn't think of anything she wanted more right now. It was all she could think about as she struggled with some awful Herbology project that kept on squirting purple goo on her. It was late afternoon and she couldn't wait for the day to end and the evening to begin.

When she was finally released from the class, she made her way back to her dorm. Her uniform was going to need cleaning during the night, so she placed it in the laundry basket before getting in the shower. Luckily the goo did come off without too much hassle, but it did take a bit of scrubbing to get it out of her hair.

As she was rinsing her hair, she heard this ringing, which must have been in her ears as ears sometimes did, but it was really loud. Then she felt a sharp tug in her navel which knocked her back into the wall, then another which made her lose consciousness.

Next thing she knew, she was standing in another room. A dark room, which was not a bathroom.

"Back at last, Miss Granger." She heard a familiar voice.

Professor Snape stood frozen as he realised she was nude. Hermione's hands flew to cover herself. An awkward second passed before he lifted up his wand and transformed something on his desk into a dressing gown.

He held it out to her and Hermione hesitated as she had to move one arm to grab it which would reveal either her breast, so lower down. Professor Snape cleared his throat and pointedly looked in the other direction while she grabbed the gown off him. She was burning with embarrassment. This was even worse than whatever idea of embarrassing situations her mind could concoct. She had always dreaded falling down in his class, but this was so much worse.

"I hope you are not worse for wear." He said in his cool measured voice.

Not worse for wear, the man who has made it his business to strip me of every house point I've ever earned just saw me naked, how could I possibly not be worse off, her mind screamed.

"It has taken a great deal of preparation to get you back." He said, still looking in the other direction.

"Thank you." She said. The heat from the shower was starting to dissipate and the cold was encroaching.

"It has been about three months since you left."

"So it is mid winter?"

"Yes."

"Maybe I should go back to my dorm and dress." She said. The cold from the stone under her feet were numbing her bare feet. "Thank you for bringing me back."

"I'm afraid the dorm is closed." He said. "The school is closed."

"What do you mean the school is closed?" Hermione said suddenly deeply concerned.

"I think you should go to the Burrows." He said, still avoiding looking at her. "Use my fireplace. Go now."

Hermione stood there for a second, not knowing what to do. Something had happened and she wanted to know what. She wanted to demand that he tell her, but was afraid to find out the answer.

"Where is Dumbledore?" She asked.

"Go now." He snapped after a tense second.

She walked over to the fireplace and threw the powder that would transport her to the Burrow.

"Hermione?" Someone said as she stepped out of the fire with wet hair in a dressing gown. The whole family was sitting around the dinner table frozen as they looked at her.

"You made it back." Ginny said with tears of relief.

"I'm fine, just a little time travel accident." She said cheerily. No need to mention that she had just spent the last few weeks screwing Lucius Malfoy. Or that the potions professor who hated her more than any student he had ever thought, except for maybe Harry, had just seen her in the buff. No one ever needed to know that. Never mind, she was so happy to see everyone.

"Where's Fred?" Hermione asked.

Molly Weasley's face crumpled and she ran from the room.

Oh no, was all that Hermione mind could process. Something really bad had happened and Fred had got hurt.

"Hermione." Arthur Weasley started and led her to a chair away from the others. The look on her face told her there was more bad news.

They told her of the final battle and of Harry and Dumbledore's heroic deaths defeating Voldemort. Hermione had the wind knocked out of her and she spent the next three days crying.

She hated herself for having not been there. Instead having been away frolicking with the enemy no less. What made it even worse was that Harry had been glad she was somewhere safe as the battle loomed. If only she had been there, there was a possibility that the outcome would have been different.

Arthur Weasley tried to console her by telling her that it was Harry's destiny to destroy Voldemort. He was adamant that Hermione's presence in the battle would not have changed anything, in fact it could have ended worse if she was there. She would have done her utmost

to save Harry, getting killed in the process and this was something that she could not save him from.

Hermione still wasn't convinced and the guilt she felt was killing her.

For several weeks, Hermione felt no joy in the world. But spring eventually came and life grudgingly returned to the Burrows. Hermione busied herself with studying for the NEWTs. The NEWTs were on for anyone who wanted to take them, but few probably would as most had only studied half the year. It gave her brain a chance to focus on something that wasn't painful.

Hogwarts was being rebuilt, but the damage was extensive so the school would not open again until the new school year. Both Ginny and Ron would return, but Hermione decided to sit the NEWTs and finish. She didn't want to go back. Not with Harry gone.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12

Lucius was in his study when he felt Hermione leave the time she was never supposed to be in. It had given him no hint and he didn't know what was happening, but it hit him like a mountain. The second she left, the rest of his memories rewrote themselves. Twenty five years of emotions in a minute. It felt like he was being run over by a train. He wasn't sure how long he lasted before he passed out, whether from mental overload or the fact that he had stopped breathing.

He woke up the next day, having never felt so completely drained in all his life. His body felt sore from the awkward position he had passed out in. In fact it screamed its protest as he finally regained consciousness.

At first he felt nothing as he tried to assess the damage, but a few seconds in, the emotions started creeping in. Hated emotions. Useless things he had always tried to rid himself of, or at least control and suppress them if they were absolutely necessary. Having turned his back on all emotions, even dark ones, left him a bit inadequate when it came to identifying them. The only emotion he usually gave free will was annoyance. It was an emotion he excelled at. But it was more of a reflection of the object, or more likely, person that was in some way deficient or inadequate.

Whatever it was that he was 'feeling', it felt awful. As every other time he was unfortunately subjected to an emotion, he wondered why anyone would willingly want to subject themselves to this.

But in the jumble of emotions that he could barely contain under his calm exterior, he recognised grief. Grief at the loss of what he could only surmise was the mudblood, although the analytical part of him hoped it was the things she did to him. The grief had now imprinted itself on his memories. As had a fairly strong sense of sexual frustration. It had weaved itself into everything.

It made him reflect on the handful of times he had actually had sex, which had all been staid and unsatisfying instances with his wife. He hated the want to abandon himself in the mudblood's body. The overwhelming urge to lose himself in its pleasure. Even worse the sense that it meant something.

He was drowning in emotions. He tried his very best to clear his mind over the next few days but every time a sight, sound or scent would recall a memory, the unwelcome emotional onslaught would come as well. Oh how he hated her. Not only for what she was, but more importantly for what she had done to him. She had irrevocably changed him. Bitch.

Maybe this had been Dumbledore's plan. The old codger probably sent the little whore back to destabilise him. It was a brilliant plan if he had, because it was completely debilitating.

He didn't know where the bitch was. Surely she would know of Potter and Dumbledore's demise. He could imagine the sorrow in her big doe eyes. The quiet sound as she wept.

He hated her. But unsuppressable was that juvenile part of him that adored her. The part that contained his youthful exuberance, with all its annoying beliefs that petty emotions meant more than anything else.

The emotions made him feel weak like a little girl. He would learn to suppress them. The sexual frustration, was another matter. He wasn't plagued by memories anymore. No more hot sessions in the library or stabs of desire whenever the mudblood bent over. But the yearning to sink into her remained. It never seemed to let up. Relentlessly plaguing his mind.

He got the best whores money could buy to sate the urge. He even managed to get one with bushy brown hair one. It took some convincing because professional whore typically didn't go for the bushy brown hair look. The girls would relieve the tension for a while, but it never quite hit the spot of complete abandonment. Perhaps that was only a capability of the young.

He hated the desire. It was like constant pain, draining. He did the best he could to focus on the political situation. The world was still in a mess and there were opportunities abound. His candidate was doing well in the polls. His insiders had acquired good positions in the regulatory, law enforcement and financial departments, which put them in a good position to influence any new laws or important projects.

He saw nothing of the mudblood and he would never sink so low as to seek her. Snape did mention that she was with the Weasleys. A wave of disgust washed over him as he dealt with the fact that he lusted after a mudblood who was the ward of the Weasleys, none of which deserve to be a part of this world. They wallowed in their poverty. Breeding like rabbits. Everything about them was unseemly.

He received a sharp pang of irrational rage as he heard that the mudblood had arrived back in the nude. Wet and glistening, apparently. Lucius had never truly felt jealousy in such a confrontational manner. He wanted to rip Snape's throat out. Wanting to hurt his best friend in a jealous rage because he had seen her naked.

He concluded that he would have to work on the possessiveness he felt. The possession he didn't want, never wanted. She had done this to him and he hated her.

The Burrows was quiet when Ron and Ginny returned to Hogwarts. Of the Weasley children only Percy was still living at home. Hermione couldn't quite forgive him for his desertion when Voldemort was manipulating the ministry. She just couldn't respect his for being so completely blinded and frankly idiotic.

She couldn't quite manage to go home, back to her parents. Irrationally she felt that she would lose Harry if she left the magical world, like it had all been a dream to begin with. So she stayed at the Burrows. They had plenty of space and she was more than welcome.

Some days were better than others. She missed Harry like an ache. Sometimes she wished she'd never been brought back. She had been so happy. With Lucius, where Harry was fine and there still was a possibility that everything would turn out right.

All those details about James, Lily and Sirius she had meticulously stored away were all orphans now. She had kept them for Harry and no one else really truly cared.

Sometimes she ached for Lucius. His dry humour and his pragmatic way of looking at things. The way he made her feel when he touched her. She could now fully acknowledge that she had fallen in love with him.

She saw them as two different people. The Lucius Malfoy here and the boy she had known. She could not see any similarities between them. Although she had been surprised when she learnt that he had works as part of the Order and had been vital to the defeat of Voldemort. Clearly no one trusted him, but the part he had played, along with Professor Snape was undeniable.

Hermione dreaded seeing him. She hoped like hell that he wouldn't recall the girl he spent so many nights with. Maybe that would be too much to hope for, but as long as he does not connect that girl with her. That was a distinct possibility. You'd never assume that people you meet were actually misplaced people from the future would you.

Molly and Arthur didn't seem to remember than much of her, which boded well. Actually it bolstered her confidence quite a bit. She had spent more time with them than anyone, except Lucius. It made her wonder about who she would remember from her school years. She would never forget Harry obviously, or Ron or Ginny. Neville. Draco for less auspicious reasons. Maybe they were the only people she would remember in 25 years. It was a depressing thought.

Saying that, she had no desire to rush back to school to reacquaint herself. Mostly Harry, but she could imagine Draco cornering her and telling her how vile she was. That would just be awkward considering.

Thinking was depressing her. Maybe she needed to get out of the house. The dwindling pile of parchment gave the perfect excuse. It was a rare sunny day. Still cold, but it would be a crime to stay inside on a day like this.

It seemed everyone else had a similar thought because Diagon Alley was full of shoppers. She had not seen Diagon Alley this packed for a couple of years. The magical world was putting the war behind them and normalcy was returning. It was nice to see. She hoped all these people appreciated the sacrifice Harry had made for them. Dumbledore too.

She spent some time in the stationary store. Looking over the novelty wares. Inks that changed colour. Inks that only became visible when the person you wanted read it. Inks that only became visible after the writer died.

She considered going into the muggle world. It might be nice to lose herself in the muggle stores for a while. Maybe get a nice coffee. The muggles were so much better at coffee. Actually many saw coffee as a muggle world infiltrate and looked down on the brew.

But a nice cup with some frothy milk and a bit of hazelnut syrup might just be what she needed right now. Of her friends, Harry was the only one who would understand the delights of the muggle world. She had lost that link now. The two worlds seemed just a little further apart.

Having made up her mind, she walked out into the Alley with the intent of walking to the Leaky Cauldron. She walked for about two minutes when she saw him.

He was standing about twenty meters away, but he was frozen like a dark immovable barrier. Hermione froze as well.

He knew. He knew. He knew it all. She could tell. The narrow eyes and tight lips. He was furious.

Hermione's heart was pounding in her chest and her fight or flight instinct was in high gear. Her brain was buzzing as she took in the man starting a little ahead of her. He looked nothing like the boy she'd known. He was broader in every sense. His face was different, broader, more masculine. These were none of the boyish features. But the eyes were the same. The anger in them was burning her.

After what seemed an eternity of the scorching accusing look, Hermione grabbed for her wand in her pocket. She apparated away as soon as she got her fingers around it.

When she got back to the Burrows, she let out the breath she was holding. Once the blind panic let up, confusion and fright flooded her brain.

He knew. He knew all of it. Hermione covered her mouth with her hand as she stood in the quiet dining room. Trying to get some control of her spinning thoughts and queasy stomach. The only noise was the ticking of the clock.

He hated her. This beast of a man, who hated her before. Hated her even more now.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13

Lucius was absolutely furious. In such a state, no one would go near him. Seeing the little bitch in Diagon Alley had made him completely lose his cool. In fact he had wrecked his study. Now he was embarrassed of losing his iron tight control, but it couldn't compete with the fury he felt.

He sat down in his chair and pinched the bridge of his nose. She had looked surprised. Her mouth forming an 'o' out of shock. Very similar to another one of her expressions, which she reveals in very different circumstances. He knew all of her expressions as his teenage self had catalogued them, including his favourites and the ones he hated seeing.

He knew there was a possibility of seeing her, it had only been a matter of time, but the actual occurrence had shocked him too. The anger had been beyond anything he had felt before, driven by the fact that the first emotions he felt hadn't been anger. His present state was entirely her fault and she deserved to suffer for it.

He had been on his way back from the Ministry, where he had managed to convince the confused and disorganised workers to agree that perhaps it would be best for everyone to delay the return of the muggleborns' wands and magical rights until after the election. He, of course, had no intention of ever letting them be returned.

She didn't have her wand. He knew this because she had returned stark naked. The thought of Severus being privy to the sight still shot a bolt of jealous rage through him.

Minerva McGonagall was being more obstinate on the issue of muggleborns, but it was only a matter of time before he could convince the Governors that the elderly witch may not be the right person to lead the school through this new exciting age.

Hermione was still a bundle of nerves the next day. She tried to dissect the situation, but it just seemed to fall apart in her head. She wasn't sure what she felt. She still missed his dreadfully and the man she'd met yesterday had been some kind of echo of him. The same eyes. The eyes she could literally drown in.

She was too scared to leave the house. She didn't want to run into him again. Molly of course noticed something was bothering her and Hermione convinced her that something had reminded her of Harry and she was just a little down today.

Hermione was using Harry's wand. It didn't work well for her. Hermione had convinced herself that it was mourning as well and it made her not mind that the wand worked poorly for her. None of the wand makers were open for business yet so there was no way of buying a new one, but Hermione didn't mind, she liked having Harry's wand.

So she didn't want to go out, and she couldn't concentrate to study, which placed her in a bit of a pickle. Her brain was in love and obsessed, with only this horrible man as the link to the boy she was in love with. This sucked, she decided. And she wasn't capable of doing

anything other than dwell on it. So in the end she had to take up gardening. Not something that naturally appealed to her, but it did give her mind some kind of distraction. Molly was of course happy to have some assistance in her vast kitchen garden.

Hermione admired how happy Molly and Arthur were. It had been something she had always taken for granted, until now when she had happened to have fallen in love with the most inappropriate person on the planet. Who could she blame but herself?

It made her wonder what kind of marriage she wanted. If she married Ron, which was not really an option because he was dating half of the school now, being Quidditch captain and a war hero, she could have a happy life like Molly. It was just that she didn't love Ron in that way. She didn't love anyone in that way, except for fucking Lucius Malfoy. Do these things only happen to her?

What if these feelings never went away? No, she was sure they would, given time. The boy she loved didn't exist after all, just a ghost of the past, of potential other universes. Another universe where she and Lucius would be happy, a long happy life, where they were the same age and not thrown together by some time turner accident.

No, it was still a ridiculous notion. Even in an alternate dimension was it a ridiculous thought. She would marry Lucius Malfoy and Draco Malfoy would be her son. No, there was no way to reconcile it, no matter how you turned it. And its not like Lucius Malfoy would have married her anyway, it was against his beliefs even back then. Although secretly she liked to think that he would have gone against his background and family. It was a nice idea, a stupid idea that her love addled brain concocted.

She had to think of the future but her stupid brain would not let go of the past. She would just have to wait it out. Trying not to think of those old gothic novels where people would mourn their lost love for the rest of their lives. Surely people got over this.

A couple of weeks slowly passed and Hermione started to get over the shock of running into the full grown Lucius Malfoy. In fact, she was determined not to care what he thought. She couldn't help what had happened, it was done and he could just deal with it. Although the thought of him realising that she was even capable of falling in love with him, knowing what he was, was mortifying, although he would probably just assume that was completely natural; being irresistible to women.

No, if she was going to get over this, she would have to start having a life. Studying, getting out of the house like normal people. She decided to bite the bullet and just do it. The first outing to Hogsmead went without a hitch. No one laughed at her for being stupid enough to fall in love with a pureblood fascist.

The next day she decided to go back to Diagon Alley. There were some books she needed so she headed to the familiar and comforting surroundings of Flourish and Blotts. A couple of hours lost in the aisles would do her good.

There were lots of new releases. It had been close to a year since she'd had a good look. She found two must haves and about five maybes to be determined at the end.

A particular tome on the magical links with medieval muggle science was interesting. As she stood examining the table of contents, she felt a shift in the universe. The oxygen seemed sucked out and darkness engulfed the space. She just knew he was there.

Her mouth went completely dry, but for some reason she wasn't afraid. Maybe she should have been, but she couldn't bring herself to fear him. She noticed the scent. The same scent. It had some different tones to it, he obviously wore some sort of cologne, but the same scent was there underneath it. The one she had lived with in her clothes, in her hair, on her skin. The one that made her mouth water and her stomach flip, clench, drop.

She didn't look up as he moved. She could sense exactly where he was as he walked up behind her, like an interaction between magnetic fields. Goosebumps spread across her skin as she closed her eyes. She could hear his steady breath, while she had pretty much given up that particular activity. She could feel heat. He must be standing close, too close.

She didn't dare look up. She wondered what to do. Maybe put the book down and walk away without looking behind her. Leave all the books and just bolt for the exit. But somehow her legs just weren't coming to the party.

Sensation flooded her skin as she felt him moving one of her curls. The tiny movement radiated throughout her body. And beyond any reason she wanted more.

He touched her on the back of her shoulder, a light touch she could feel through the leather jacket she was wearing. She couldn't help the gasp at the touch.

She felt him move her hair as he brought it to his nose and drew the scent in. Hermione felt the action all the way down to her core. More as he leaned in a little closer. It felt so familiar, so right, but it was completely wrong. She could feel his body now. So absolutely beyond forbidden, but she couldn't stop, couldn't walk away.

The press of his body got more instant and he moved her hair aside. She felt his breath on her neck, existing in a torturous state of anticipation before she felt the slight stroke of his lips at the base of her neck. The touch made her melt into the warm body behind her.

The kiss got a little firmer as he explored her neck and Hermione got lost in the heady feelings weighing down her body. She needed more. Needed him.

Her head leaned back on his shoulder as his hand travelled up and cupped her breast. Hermione was now so lost in sensation, she had no idea of anything other than the two of them together, again.

"Such a wanton whore." He said quietly.

Hermione felt the words like icy cold water, jarring her out of the little illusion she had succumbed to. She grabbed the shelf in front of her and pushed him away with all her might.

"Don't touch me." She yelled stepping away as far as her stride would take. She wasn't sure whether she was more embarrassed or hurt. She completely blamed herself for being so stupid. Finally she turned to confront him, to punish her stupid brain for fooling her.

"I am in love with you." She said. "No strike that, I am in love with someone you used to be. Someone who doesn't exist. More fool I. No one could love you."

The cold arrogance marred his features from the beauty she knew he had.

"Don't ever touch me again." She said before walking away. She wrapped her arms around her body as tight as she could. The chill of the air seemed to leak into her very bones.

Stupid, stupid, stupid, she repeated to herself all the way back to the Burrow. How could she have been so completely stupid to let him touch her. She had just let him, even encouraged it on some level. And he had called her a whore. Just desserts for sheer idiocy.

Underneath all the self flagellation was the pervasive sadness that the lovely boy she loved had turned into something so ugly. Had been beaten and assaulted into the awful man she had tangled with today. What could only have been a long painful process.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14

Lucius felt adrenalin flowing through his body. He felt like he had been in battle. He felt exhausted. His encounter with the mudblood has shaken him. He hadn't expected her to affect him, but she had. She compelled him to touch her and then he punished her for it.

He knew he had never actually touched her before. It was all memories, false memories. But he knew the smell of her hair, it was so very familiar and the soft buttery feel of her skin. She tasted divine. She felt divine. She smelled divine. And she let him touch her, welcomed it.

He wasn't sorry he had called her a whore. She deserved it. It is what she was. She had done this to him, seduced him at a time when he was weak, when his hormones were out of control. He hadn't intended on touching her, but he ended up doing it anyway. His intention was to forget she existed, because she didn't exist, she was nothing, a lowly muggle.

But his hands were shaking with the adrenalin. He should have been rougher, he told himself. Showed her that she would be much better off staying away from him. She should make more of an effort to stay out of his way.

She'd said she was in love with him. Stupid girl. If she thought he could be lead around like a teenager, she had something else coming.

Fury was coursing through his veins, burning bitterly throughout its path. He wanted to squash something, throw something, rip something.

He settled for an ornate glass vase. Probably something ridiculously expensive that his great great great grandmother bought on some Grand tour of Europe. It wasn't enough. He had to throw something else. Only sheer violence would relieve this tension.

A few more of the family treasures were dealt to before he felt calm enough to take off his cloak. He had even broken the tip off his cane. But it would all mend. The elves would see to it. Nothing in this world was unmendable, expect for maybe people. Right now mendable objects were not quite what he wanted to break, but it would have to suffice.

Actually he thought the violence was crude and undignified, but he just had to, just like he just had to touch her hair, feel the curl on his lips, smell the scent. The ridiculous mudblood was turning him into an animal. Turning him into a muggle, with their violence and dramatics. He tried to calm down, taking deep breaths to relieve the bitterness he felt.

He knew the true reason he was so angry was that it hadn't gone away. Whatever she had done to him, it hadn't gone away. It still plagued him constantly, draining him of energy. She was like a parasite, feeding on him and whichever way he turned, he could not relieve it.

But when he touched her, stood up against her, it was like the world was vibrating. Energy flowed, magic flowed and he hated her for it. The feeling was indescribable, but he knew it was powerful.

He had always scoffed at people who spoke of women bringing on madness, but he knew this was powerful enough to bring it. Judging from his own behaviour he could not deny it. It was lust, powerful lust. What else could it be? The stupid girl spoke of love. He had always known it did not exist. Lust did, maybe not to any great degree in his personal experience, but it was much more likely than some poncy love.

She had said he was unlovable, which was true. He had no illusions about it. Affection was not a well known concept in the Malfoy family. He felt it for his son, but such things are kept private and hidden. In some ways he felt some for his wife although almost exclusively in respect to her absence.

It should not be legal what this mudblood girl has done to him. There should be some recourse for it. It was a complete and utter violation.

So the foray into normalcy had ended in disaster, Hermione acknowledge, ending up with her getting felt up by Lucius Malfoy, Death Eater and pureblood supremacist extraordinaire. The sting wasn't as bad the next day but she felt like the dumbest person on the planet. What had she been thinking?

The problem was that she hadn't been thinking, she had just... let him. And now she had the lovely memory of him calling her a whore to record for prosperity. Plus the burn of his lips at the base of her neck, which was still there by the way. No matter how much she tried to rub it away, it still lingered.

She just could not get motivated today. She ended up just sitting at the kitchen table, staring into space and mentally kicking herself.

What in the world was she going to do? She told him she was in love with him. What was wrong with her? If he was anything like Draco, everyone would know by now, but she knew he wasn't. He never had been. She wasn't sure what he was now, but she was pretty sure she knew his heart as it had been. Never soft, not hard, but brutally honest.

She missed him, that was all. Missed him smile. And she had been desperate to recapture some of it. So desperate, she had let a Death Eater kiss her neck.

And boy had she paid for it. She was almost glad he called her a whore, who knows what would have happened if he hadn't. Hermione didn't want to think about it, but her brain wouldn't let it go. There was only one thing for it, more gardening.

But the garden was only a superficial distraction because her brain wanted to analyse every single thing that happened, every touch, every sound, every sensation.

As she thought about it, relentlessly, she came to wonder why he'd done it. Why had he come up behind her, why had he touched her, why had he kissed her? It was obvious what he thought of her. He had her practically captivated, then go ruin it by insulting her to her face. Well, point taken, whatever it was.

The next day, she wondered what she was going to do. She felt scared of leaving the house. If this kept up, she would become a hermit. She had to get over this. Had to stop being scared of running into him. Next time, she determined, she would ignore him, walk away and pretend that nothing had ever happened. Maybe she could even go so far as to be polite. No that might give the wrong impression. Ignoring was the strategy.

And under no circumstance will she let him feel her up. No matter how much she dreamt about it, because she did and it wasn't young him, it was now him. Tension fraught dreams where he would catch her, corner her and she was scared, but not entirely scared.

She decided to make another break into the world when Percy asked if she wanted to come observe the inner workings of the Ministry one day. It was an open day, which was usually reserved for children, but Percy had never been able to convince anyone to take him up on the day. Why not, she thought. She was planning on working in the Ministry after getting her NEWTs, she might as well get a taste of what it would be like.

She did find it interesting. She followed Percy to meetings, then back to his desk, then to drop something off at another department. She declined spending lunch with him, as a break would do her sanity good. Instead she found a solitary bench of eat the sandwich Molly had packed. She wished she had someone to talk to, but really who could she tell about this?

The afternoon went a little slower. Another meeting was on the cards and Hermione had almost fallen asleep as Percy finally finished scribbling on a parchment.

"Time to go." He said and Hermione stood up from the chair she had been given. "Now, this is a vital meeting and Mrs. Jeninia and Mrs. Albertington do not get on. It is fraught with tension, but we have some important points about the length of educational broom sticks that must be signed off today. All hell will break loose if we don't get this accomplished today."

Right, Hermione said to herself, although she could not imagine any kind of significant consequences if they would not agree on points related to school broom stick lengths. But she followed Percy as he marched down the hall.

"It's on the third floor." He pointed out as he got to the lift.

The lift was half full as they stepped inside and it proceeded to go sideways as it took off. Over the next several stops it slowly cleared.

"We are going to be late." Percy said impatiently tapping his foot. "Oh for Merlin's sake, now we are on the fifth floor."

The doors opened and Hermione's brain was confronted with the large form of Lucius Malfoy. Her eyes shot down to the ground as he stepped into the carriage to stand behind them.

"Good afternoon, Mister Malfoy." Percy chirped turning to the silent man behind them. "Beautiful day."

"Is it?" Malfoy said in the crisp, uninterested voice that she knew well. It had gained some sharpness over the years, but it had been with him for many years.

Hermione felt like she couldn't breathe. She felt him like radiation behind her, or how she would imagine radiation would feel like if you could feel it.

Percy was chattering about something and Hermione couldn't pay attention. She could hear Lucius' sigh of annoyance, but she kept her eyes plastered on the floor.

"Now you must not interrupt the conversation." Percy said and Hermione realised he was talking to her. "This is an important meeting and it is extremely important that things go right, so no outbursts."

Hermione felt embarrassed at being talked to like a child by Percy, particularly in front of the present company. Percy was trying to show off, she knew. Normally she would come up with a witty little remark to bite back with, but today she couldn't manage. She could barely breathe. It was so hot in there, she felt like her shirt was strangling her. She wanted to strangle Percy, hell she really wanted to strangle Lucius, but she couldn't trust herself.

She felt mortified by the current situation, stuck again with him in close quarters. What were the chances? What manner of karma had she accumulated to deserve this? Oxygen flooded the tiny space as the doors opened. The light stung her eyes and she practically fell out of the lift in her eagerness to escape.

"This is our floor." Percy said, not noticing that she was already half way across the small foyer.

Hermione heard Percy's footsteps and no more. She heard the doors of the lift close again and the whoosh as it carried its oppressive cargo away. Not until then did Hermione turn to check that he really was gone. As she confirmed that no one was there, half expecting to see the black figure, she let out a long ragged breath.

Not too bad, she said to herself as the meeting started. Nothing had happened. And she had survived. She had managed to ignore him like she said she would and it had worked. Nothing had happened. She didn't hear a single word of the meeting.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15

Lucius sat in his study a few days later contemplating the mudblood as he usually did these days. He balanced his glass over firewhiskey on the armrest of his favourite chair in front of the fire. He surveyed the room, everything was mended, but it still felt broken. Everything felt broken. Maybe it was time to redecorate.

He hadn't seen her since the lift in the Ministry, where she had escaped his company as fast as she could. Part of him wished the poncy Wealsey boy hadn't been there, another part of him was glad. A strong part wanted to know what she was doing with him, not liking being confronted with her closeness with the Weasley boys although he was sure this was not the one she was attached to from what he understood.

Judging from the way the boy spoke to her, he doubted there was anything going on between them, which pleased that part of him that wanted to tear Snape apart.

"Lucius." He heard his wife's voice from the door.

"Narcissa." He said. "I didn't realise you were back."

"I haven't been for long." She said and entered the room with her typical glide. It had been a long time since he'd seen her, although he wasn't entire sure how long, he didn't keep track.

"How are you?" She asked.

"Fine." He replied, surprised at the question.

She checked for dust on the mantle piece.

"It seems the elves have been mending things for some time now."

"Things break, it happens."

She made a tsk sound. "I know you, I know there is something wrong. I know you are not prone to fits of anger. What is the matter?"

"Nothing." He growled.

"Are your scheming not going to plan?" She probed.

"Everything is fine." He said and took a swig of his drink.

She made the annoying little sideways head lean she did when she was contemplating something. She wasn't stupid, vapid maybe, but not stupid when it suited her.

"Don't tell me its a woman." She said with a tinkling laugh.

"Of course not." He snapped and returned his gaze to the fire.

"Oh the fates, it is a woman." She said and stared at him.

He tsked his annoyance, which proceeded a moment of silence.

“Well, I’ll be.” She said and then broke out in a laugh that he knew was genuine. “Why Lucius, I didn’t think you were capable.”

He didn’t know how to shut her down. She always was capable at sniffing out the truth, the trait he hated most about his wife.

“What manner of woman would be capable of melting that lump of ice you have in your chest?” She asked with obvious fascination. “It cannot be any usual manner, because you have never shown any interest before. Who is she?”

“No one, I don’t know what you’re on about woman.” He snapped.

“And it is bad.” She said staring at him. “She really has her hooks into you. And you are not happy about it.” More laughter.

“Is it someone inappropriate?” She asked just louder than a whisper. “It is.”

“I am warning you, Narcissa.” He said, but she knew it was a ruse, he never had and never would conduct any violence towards her.

“Someone less than pure.” She continued, stepping behind him, just in case.

He hated how she could read him. No matter what he did, she could smell the truth.

“A girl.” He finally conceded. After a moment of silence he continued, “A mudblood.”

That brought a belly laugh from his dear wife.

“Just desserts.” She said. “The heartless Death Eater falls in love with a mudblood. Oh the justice.”

“Not love.” He snapped, “Just...”

“Just what?”

“Just a slight infatuation.”

“What are you going to do?” She asked.

“I will have to deal with it.”

“Huh.” She said in a manner that was customarily undignified for her. “I never thought I would see the day. I am sorry darling, it must be quite distressing for you.”

“It is highly annoying.”

“I can imagine.” She said walking toward the door, “Although I am usually a bit more for going with the flow myself in such matters. The wave rides itself out over time, mostly.”

He knew full well in that respect, she had been flowing ever which way in the last twenty five years, not that they had ever really discussed her adventures, not that he had ever really cared.

His wife’s laughter at his predicament only served to highlight the embarrassment of the situation. Something had to be done, he could not go around breaking his treasures apart each

day. Her analogy to a wave was apt. He was exhausted swimming against the flow, perhaps he had better try another tact.

Hermione didn't leave the Burrow again until the day of a minor unveiling of a plaque commemorating Dumbledore's time on the Wizengamut. It was expected that order members show up at these things and she wanted to show her respect for the man she had admired. There was a chance that he would be there, he was officially a member of the order, no matter how ill the title sat on him. But things had gone well the last time, so there was no reason to think it wouldn't again, it was after all in a crowd full of people.

She watched the proceedings from the back of the crowd, she wanted an easy exit if she needed it. The foyer was full of journalists and dignitaries.

She felt him behind her before even realising he was there. Felt the electricity. Why always behind her? It had proven uncomfortable, although in front of her was probably little better.

"Miss Granger." He said that low sharp voice.

Hermione hunched over slightly and decided to ignore him.

"You have done something to me Miss Granger." He said, low enough so only she could hear. "Something very disturbing."

She didn't know what to say. "I'm sorry." She finally managed.

"Well, an apology, although necessary isn't solving things." He said. "You have made things very difficult for me."

"I didn't mean to." She said trying for an exit, but the crowd didn't present an easy option now that he had her back.

"Do not lie, Miss Granger." He said, "You knew full well what you were doing."

"I didn't mean for it to happen, it just did."

"Come of it girl, you cannot pretend that there were no choices made."

"You made them too."

He hissed with annoyance. "But you knew what was to come. You could not have imagined that I would be happy about you seducing me. What did you think the outcome would be?"

"I didn't." She defended herself. He was standing close enough for her to feel him with whatever sense it was that did, but not close enough to touch. She shifted uncomfortably between her feet.

"How did you think I would react?" He pressed.

"I didn't think you would remember." She whispered quickly.

"Come now, Miss Granger, you opened your thighs and showed me heaven." She said, his lips so close she could feel his breath on her earlobe. "Any you expected that I wouldn't remember?"

Hermione's breath caught in her throat. She was stunned by his words, shocked at his audacity to approach her in such a way, off balance by his nearness and terrified that someone would see.

"It just happened." She stammered. "I didn't mean to."

"This is your fault Miss Granger. You have ripped my life apart, I cannot sleep, I cannot eat. Now you must fix it."

"I can't." She said desperately, not sure what he was saying, but her heart was slamming against her rib cage. Made worse by his step closer, close enough that she could feel his body against her back.

"You must exercise this demon and fix the havoc you have wreaked."

"No." She whispered.

"Yes." He said. "This is your doing, now fix it. One night."

"I can't."

"You will." He said and splayed his hand out on the side of her waist. She felt the touch immensely, felt it vibrate through her. The desire to melt into him was so strong, but she steadied herself against the onslaught of sensation that his nearness was bringing. Why the fuck was this happening?

Its not him, its not him, its not him, she repeated to herself. This is someone else. Someone dark, someone threatening. No matter, her lips still ached for a kiss, but the sudden coldness at her back told her that he was gone.

She wanted to cry. She rushed out of there and apparated back to the Burrows. God damnit, every time she left the house, he was there and now he was doing more than taunting her. He was demanding something, retribution, vengeance. No he had said exercising the demon. It was plaguing him and he wanted to gone.

One night. He had said one night. One night of what? Torturing her? He had said she had shown him heaven. It must be sex. He wanted one night with her to exercise the demon, get over it, to finish what was unfinished.

No she couldn't. Not with him, it was completely out of the question. Whatever was started was with someone else, not with him. How dare he demand that of her.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16

Hermione didn't sleep that night. Her mind was racing and would not slow down. She played the latest run in with him over and over. He must be absolutely mad, she concluded if he thought she would go along with it. He probably was mad. What sane person would follow Voldemort anyway? Granted he had 'switched sides' when it suited him and he had been instrumental in bringing together the battle between Voldemort and Harry, but still what sane person goes, oh, there's an utter lunatic, lets pledge our allegiance.

It occupied her mind the next day too, she paced in the garden for hours. She had made up her mind, she was never leaving the Burrow again. In the end, she would have to marry Percy and live here with their snotty kids, she thought with a shudder. Just so she could avoid Lucius Malfoy. That made her even more angry.

One night, he said. One night of what? Although she knew exactly what. What did he have in mind, strawberries and champagne, a little light music? The thought was revolting. Or maybe up against the wall in some back alley. He obviously thought she was a whore. Would he pay her after?

She needed to weed. She needed to rip hapless plants out of the ground for being unlucky enough to be the wrong sort. The irony was not lost on her. Maybe someday when she had her own place, she would grow a weed garden.

Molly obviously thought she was insane, but kept making cups of tea for her. Being around in case she wanted to talk. Hah, that would be the day. Oh, by the way, I fucked Lucius Malfoy and now he wants me to do it again. Any advice?

A long walk around the surrounding countryside did calm her down a bit. But the underlying tension was still there, wearing her out. She tried to study but was too distracted to focus.

He said the same. He said he couldn't sleep or eat. If that was even true. It was pretty disturbing if it was, that she was affecting him so. That would be like baiting a bear for amusement. Not the right person to pick on.

She still longed for the boy, the boy that was buried somewhere deep inside him. The one lost in the years of awfulness that followed. The one that told of a different potential that never eventuated. The sweet boy, ok, maybe that was pushing it a bit, but funny, smart and sexy.

She missed him so much. So much that when she lay in her bed in the afternoons to seek some privacy, she wanted to touch herself but didn't because it would eventually warp into the older version of him and that was just scary. Now he was bigger and broader, and just scarier.

But she would be lying if she didn't admit that part of her wanted to go there. Part of her was very curious and perversely turned on by the idea. A dangerous man, who obviously wanted her and who it seems could make her body vibrate with his presence.

That is not how things should be, not how sex should be. It shouldn't be baring your throat to the wolf and hope he doesn't kill you. It should be sweet and loving and supporting. It shouldn't have to be an act of blind faith.

She really was losing her mind. One day as she was napping in bed as the spring sun shone in, she was jarred away by feeling weight indenting on her mattress, her senses flooding with his scent. She snapped her eyes open to a quiet empty room, her heart beating a million beats per minute for no reason at all.

Gods, she was even hallucinating him in her bed now. She wasn't even safe from him here in her room. She was so tired from not sleeping properly, she really wanted to cry.

The next day, brought the first owl. Molly called her down when it came.

"Letter for you. I wonder who it's from. Such a beautiful bird." Molly said, petting it as she gave it some owl mix.

Hermione knew the handwriting. The beautiful script hadn't changed over the years. She took the letter upstairs, knowing full well that she was robbing Molly of satisfying her curiosity. She probably should have lied and said it was some Ministry business, but her brain wasn't working right.

She opened the letter with shaking hands. At least he had been sensitive enough not to put the Malfoy seal on it.

Miss Granger,

I would prefer to conclude our agreement sooner rather than later.

What agreement, she didn't agree to anything. Arrogant man. He didn't actually think she would go along with it.

Tomorrow would be ideal. I have prepared a cottage and will meet you outside of the Turnips and Lazaroot Herbology shop in Diagon Alley at 7pm tomorrow. Don't be late.

L.M.

This had to be a joke. He didn't actually think she would come along. He had chosen one of the most deserted spots in Diagon Alley to meet. But really, he didn't seriously think she would show up being ordered along like a house elf.

She grabbed a pen and scribbled a note.

L.M.

I don't know, hell hasn't quite frozen over yet.

H.G.

She flew down the stairs and attached the note to the Weasley family bird. Malfoy's bird hadn't waited around for a reply. Arrogant man.

Hermione was shaking with frustration and annoyance.

The Weasley owl returned a few hours later with another note.

Miss Granger,

I thought we discussed this the other day. This is your responsibility and you are required to repair the damage you have caused. Do not doubt that I am a very capable wizard, Miss Granger, if you need hell to freeze over, I can arrange that for you.

Perhaps you can suggest a time that is more suitable to you. I will try to arrange my schedule.

L.M.

Never suits me just fine, she thought. She didn't miss the underlying threat either. She wasn't stupid enough to not realise that she couldn't take him in a head on duel. Decades of studying the dark arts gave him a ridiculously large advantage if it ever came to that. Not to mention that his coffers ensured that he got whatever he wanted politically. She wondered if he had ever not got something he wanted.

Sadly, what he wanted right now was her. For a short time. One night to be exact. She felt a shiver of disgust and a tiny thrill of excitement that she refused to acknowledge.

Perhaps reasoning was the way to go.

L.M.

I have apologised repeatedly for what happened, Mr. Malfoy. I never intended it and I never intended to do you any harm. I am also sorry for any after effects. It would be best to let them fade.

It would be best for everyone involved and you would not have to trespass against any oaths you have made.

I know you would not believe me, but I really do wish you the best .

H.G.

It was honest. She did on some level love him, a part of him and she had told him as much. She didn't want to harm him, but equally she didn't want anything to do with him.

She attached the letter to the owl that was now looking a little despondent.

"It is about the NEWTs examinations." She lied to Molly.

As she expected she got another reply back a couple of hours later. The poor owl looked like it was about to perish.

Miss Granger,

I am touched by your concern. If it alleviates any of your own, you must know that you have my wife's wholehearted approval.

I have tried continually to divest myself of the after effects as you call them without success. It seems that they are unwilling to fade as you hope. Therefore, I must insist that they

are addressed before further disruption to my affaires and activities.

Please state the time and I will accommodate you.

L.M.

No, she just couldn't, she determined. Although she couldn't continue their correspondence as the owl would probably die of exhaustion if she sent it out again.

The idea that his wife approved was really disconcerting. What kind of marriage did he have if she approved of him sleeping with someone else? Had he told her? What did he mean by wholeheartedly?

She didn't like the idea of him being in a loveless marriage all these years. Maybe that aided the transformation from the boy she loved into the man he was now. Dark, dangerous and needing... She didn't want to think about it.

She didn't want to think about any of it anymore, didn't want to think about him and the things his life lacked.

Sex wouldn't make it go away, didn't he realise that. It just reaffirmed. It had for her, she wanted him more every time she slept with him. But this wasn't him, the him she knew, this was some derivative. Maybe the rule didn't hold.

She wasn't relenting, he realised with a deep frown. He had been surprised when she had first rejected him outright. He hadn't quite anticipated that. He didn't quite believe what she was saying, although he took the tone of her notes and responded in measure.

The handwriting of the first note was hurried. It was a knee jerk reaction. The second note was more measures, thought through although not perfected. But her apologies didn't do him any good. He knew this because he was searching the parchment for her scent. The scent that drove him wild and he was frustrated because there was just the merest hint of it, nothing he could quite latch onto. What he wanted was her scent on his fingers, her true scent.

No, this was a game and they were not done yet. He did enjoy the skirmish, but the end result was predetermined. She was like a fox hiding in her lair. All he had to do was smoke her out. He just didn't quite know how. Attacking the Burrow was a bit extreme, particularly in these times. There were more subtle ways of doing it, he knew. He was woefully unskilled at this game. He knew the truth of it and he didn't really mind, but he was supremely confident that he would achieve his goals in the end.

As far as he was concerned, sex had always been about contractual obligation. She refused to acknowledge their contract and true, she had not agreed to anything, which bothered him. With a contract there would be specified remediation for damages. The damages were undeniable, now she just needed to deliver the remediation. It was a contract in spirit.

He was sure that once delivered, this would all go away just like any other craving. Satisfy it and it would go away.

She didn't respond with any more letters. He wondered if she was contemplating relenting, but after a couple of days of no further communication, he could only conclude that she was ignoring him. He hated being ignored.

He sent one more reminder that she needed to provide a time for their assignation and was infuriated when she refused to respond.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17

Lucius did some more damage to his study. The stupid girl was ignoring him and it didn't sit well.

"Is something the matter, darling?" He heard the silky tones of his wife.

"I am not in the mood to be teased, Narcissa."

"Naturally, you will let me know if such an occasion does arise." She said and sat down in a chair in front of the pieces of a very expensive and ancient vase. She studied her finely manicured nails. "It is not going well then."

Lucius huffed and ignored her.

"The chit won't comply." He said after a while. Unused to being in the situation of needing his wife's advice, but still having nowhere else to turn.

"Would you want her to?"

"Yes." He said, sure there was something in his wife's stupid question that he wasn't getting. But his pride was too strong to admit it.

"The girl says she loves me." He said after a while.

Narcissa made a little confused head jerk, which annoyed him, because the girl had also said that no one could love him and his wife's confusion only seemed to corroborate that.

"Poor girl." She said after a while. In a more serious tone than he would like. "Never mind. I am off to Italy for a while. I miss the sun. I am sure you will manage on your own." She said and leant over to give his knee an awkward little pat. She left the room silently.

He actually wanted to question her more questions, but he knew his wife had moved on from the topic and once she had moved on, there was no going back. She was off to be with her lover. He knew she lived more with him than she did in the manor. He suspected they had a very close relationship.

What did she mean did he want her to comply? Of course he did, it is what this was all about. She would comply, he would get whatever this was out of his system and then it would be done.

Well, he did suppose it was nice to desire something. It had been a very, very long time since he'd had the chance. He was a man who got what he wanted and it usually took very little to get it. Kind of like the thrill of taking something someone else really, really wanted.

Even now, when he was securing his told on this world's future, there was very little challenge to it. With a nudge here and a nudge there, things just fell into place.

The only thing that wasn't falling into place was the relief from this infernal desire. Fade away, my bollocks, he thought. He was not a man who let things fade away, he dealt with it, dealt to it, whatever was required.

Now the girl's assistance was required and he would see to it that it happened. But it was proving difficult as the girl was hiding.

The only place she seemed to go was the bookshop. Eventually she would venture out again and the next time she did, he would remind her of what was required in person.

He ordered one of his elves to keep guard at the bookshop to let him know when the girl turned up.

The opportunity came a full week and a half later. A week plus full of frustration. Whatever this was, it wasn't fading. It wasn't helped by the fact that his mind kept on straying to the activities that were to come. The little cottage, more specifically the bed room of the little cottage.

He remembered every contour of her body. The way she clinged to him when he was inside her. Wanted him there. No one had ever really wanted him that way. Sex was not about want, particularly not on their part. He hadn't actually made a woman come before. Technically he never had. Technically he had never been with her. But for never having touched her, he remembered every bit of it. The way her skin felt, her hair against his lips. The way her nipple fit into his mouth perfectly. The way he fit into her perfectly.

He was even more vexed when he realised he managed to think himself into a raging hard on and had to resort to taking a cold shower before being able to deal with the opportunity that had finally arisen. The mudblood was in Flourish and Blotts. Hopefully she would still be there when he managed to be in a presentable state.

She was still there, he knew as he walked in the door, he could sense her. He couldn't see her, but knew she was there, probably hiding somewhere in the back. He wondered if she purposely sought a quiet and hidden place. Either way it worked out well this way. This would not be a conversation that was suited to prying ears.

As per character, she had her nose hiding in some book.

"Oh come on." She cried when she realised he was there.

"Is that any way to treat your lover?" He said.

"You are not my lover." She said and stepped to pass him.

He blocked her exit from the aisle with his cane.

"Really? I recall you saying you loved me." He said silkily, knowing full well he was teasing. But at the same time, not really. He would use it if it presented itself. She had been dumb enough to say it.

"Not you, someone you were." She said exasperatedly.

"Come now." He said. "You can't tell me you weren't hoping to run into me today."

"I can truly, honestly tell you that it was the last thing I was hoping for."

"I don't believe you." He said and stepped closer. She wasn't going to get away this time.

He watched as red blotches crept up her neck and into her cheeks. She was looking down and away from him. He couldn't deny how thrilled he was right now. He had never been in favour of violence, but the predatory feel was exhilarating.

"This was all you wanted a few months ago." He said.

"Twenty five years ago." She said.

"Oh, Miss Granger, we both know it was but a few weeks ago. Surely you are not so inconstant that you could dismiss such feelings so quickly. Last time more than proved the opposite."

She looked like she was about to hit him.

He wasn't entirely sure what to do next. But closer seemed to be what his instincts were saying. She seemed so fragile. She smelled divine. He knew the smell well, but it seemed more potent now that it wasn't filtered through his memories.

He wasn't actually touching her, just very close. She stepped back into the book shelf behind her.

"Nowhere to run." He said quietly bringing his finger up to trail the neckline of her shirt. "Now, we were discussing an arrangement."

He was so close to her caramel skin, he could almost taste it. He could almost feel her sharp intake of breath.

"No." He heard her attempt, but it came out more like a croak. He could see the goose bumps on her skin. There was room for her to leave. She could push him away, but she wasn't. He wondered how far this would go. A sharp whiplash of excitement whipped through his body as he realised she wasn't fighting. He would not have known what to do then. He wasn't sure what to do now, but this was good. He knew the end result he wanted.

He ghosted his lips over her cheekbone. His breath was so heavy he could feel it bouncing back off her skin. He was pretty sure she wasn't breathing at all. She was now looking somewhere on his neck.

Slowly he crept towards her mouth. This seemed to be where he wanted to go. Kissing had never been a significant activity in his life other than the obligatory pecks here and there. There was the odd one in his youth, but none had registered until the false memories this girl generated.

The initial contact was like an electric shock. Enough to give him a flash of fear. Enough to give him and flashing instance of uncertainty that this was the right thing to do. But the light lingering touch invited. Something would not let him back down.

The deepening of the kiss felt like something very familiar and comfortable. It was all the good things rolled up in one. Cozy bed, nice hot shower, the finest firewhiskey. Victory. And it was much better than the memories.

It was not possible to get closer now. He must be injuring her how hard he pressed her into the bookshelf, but she wasn't complaining. She wasn't fighting. She wasn't anything, just

undone in the kiss. Finally she was complying, utterly and completely. He knew it would get here. There was no other route.

A niggling in the back of his mind kept picking of him and getting louder until he realised someone was coming. At first he ignored it, but it got too loud for his finely attuned sense of self preservation.

He stepped back as two ladies walked around the corner and immediately halted in their progress.

A moment of silence as they all considered each other. The girl looked like she was in complete shock, a second from breaking down into tears. The silence prevailed.

“Come girl.” One of the ladies said, pulling her wrist. “No time to dally. Off you go.”

They had obviously drawn their conclusions. Something along the lines of him threatening the poor helpless girl, he was sure. The ladies knew full well who he was, and who she was and the assumed determination of who the culpable party was. For Merlin’s sake, he did go around threatening mudbloods in random shops. That was probably not strictly true, but it really annoyed him that it was the ladies concluded. And then set themselves the task of rescuing the hapless girl.

She was not hapless girl, he wanted to yell. Scream in frustration. The bitch had been torturing him for months. Said bitch now hugged the book in her hand to her and slipped around the corner. He could see her fly down the stairs and out of the shop. The little minx had just stolen that book, he thought.

He wanted to drag her back and tell the harpies of go to hell, but held his tongue. He knew better than to act with such impudence. He also wanted to push the harpies aside and go after her, but knew he couldn’t be trusted right now to not fuck her in the street. That would never do. She had turned him into an animal, he thought bitterly.

Instead he smiled sweetly at the ladies and made some comment on the nice spring weather they had been having. It seemed to calm the harpies somewhat. Enough for them to move along. Which left him to savour the lingering taste on his lips, while he tried to deal with all the adrenalin that was coursing through his body. He felt seriously thwarted. But he glad to know that she hadn’t run, she’d given herself completely in the kiss. Good to know.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18

Hermione's mind was in turmoil when she got home and for sometime afterwards. So much in fact that she had to go sit out of the stump in the garden until she managed to get a grip on herself. She was embarrassed that she had folded so ridiculously easily and shocked at how the kiss had completely undone her. Also so keenly reminded of how engrossing his kisses were, these kisses from someone who was and wasn't someone she loved.

The kiss was a forceful reminder that at least part of him was the lovely person she'd known. Because the kiss was just like it was before. Slightly more than tinged with need. And she didn't care how you cut it, being needed was very, very sexy.

It had been very nice and convenient to think of Lucius Malfoy as two separate people, but that kiss had pretty much proven that they were inextricably linked. And on whatever level, this Lucius Malfoy was a derivative of the first. And on some level, he needed her.

It was the most ridiculous and abstract concept, but she now knew it was real.

Maybe he was right. Maybe spending a night together might be what is called for. Maybe it will alleviate things a little, because it couldn't actually get any worse. Her every thought at the moment concerned him and maybe spending the night with him, although it may not sort her feelings, it may sort this constant fixation.

She couldn't very well spend her life sitting on a stump thinking about him and right now that was where she was trapped. Like a stuck CD making the same sound over and over again.

But the idea of spending the night with him was ludicrous. It just went against the grain. It could be the most awkward thing she would ever experience in her life. She wasn't entirely sure how people moved from being acquaintances to being in bed together, and with Lucius Malfoy there didn't seem to be a viable path there.

Although saying that, judging by the last few times she had encountered him, she just seemed unwittingly to end up entwined in him. There wasn't so much of a path, it just happened. Maybe she shouldn't worry so much, she told herself.

She was getting goosebumps even thinking about it. Maybe he was right and this could all be fixed. But what if he was wrong, what if it didn't fix it. Although what is the worst that could happen? She would end up right back here, obsessed and stuck, her every waking and dreaming moment involving him. She didn't like him enough to want to spend so much of her head space on him.

She really had nothing to lose. Chances were things would get better. She wasn't stupid enough to think that this would fix things, but it might just turn things down a notch. He didn't like her and she didn't like him, and maybe this would release some of the tension.

It was just that she was scared. The Gryffindor spirit in her didn't like to admit it, but it was true.

She wished more than anything she could think about something else, but she couldn't. She was exhausted thinking about it, but unable to stop.

She stewed on it for a whole day before she made up her mind to do it. Then quickly unmade it again. To make up her mind yet again a few hours later.

She quickly grabbed a quill and wrote 'Tonight' on a note and sent it off with an owl before she could change her mind.

On one side, this made her much more nervous. On the other, it was calming. She couldn't wait to get back to feeling normal emotions again.

The late afternoon dragged on. If she had been going on a normal night out with someone she was interested in, she would be upstairs in the bathroom doing all sorts of things to make herself more presentable. But this was not that, so she felt on principle she felt it was inappropriate to make an effort. This wasn't after all a date, a fun evening out. This was medicine for an affliction.

As time got closer, all she could do was pace. Molly was obviously wondering if she was insane and admittedly she had some right to wonder.

She flooded to Diagon Alley, telling Molly that she was meeting a friend at one of the pubs. She made her way to the Herbology store in a secluded corner of the Alley. It was dark by now and completely deserted.

She must be utterly insane, she reckoned. Waiting for a Death Eater in a dark alley. A Death Eater she would then proceed to... It was absurd. She couldn't even bring herself to think about it. What was she doing here, she wondered. No, she couldn't go through with it. She turned to go, but collided with something solid.

"Leaving already?" He said and although she shouldn't have been surprised he was there, she was.

She didn't say anything, but couldn't quite look at him either. Somewhere in her mind, something was screaming at her to leave, but her legs, as they rarely did around him, wouldn't co-operate.

She felt his hand circle around her upper arm and the tug of apparition. The instantaneous wave of nausea flooded her before she realised she had arrived wherever it was he'd taken her.

He let go of her arm and let her gain her balance. The fire started, lighting the dark room. She also realised that he could do wandless magic, which just accented that this might have been her worst idea ever.

She watched him as he took his heavy outer robe off and threw it over a chair. After, he turned to look at her. He seemed uncomfortable, not that it showed, but she knew him. She could still read him, she realised.

The room was not luxurious, but homely. This must be the cottage he wrote about. She wondered how the Malfoy family gained it, it was obviously not originally a Malfoy property.

Too plain, too simple, too cosy. Maybe inherited from some distant relative, or gained in payment. Either way, it did not match its owner.

She wanted to break the silence, because it was killing her, but she couldn't find anything to say.

Lucius' black robes didn't fit in this room. Neither did his size. This room suited shorter people. He was standing straight and constrained. He was feeling defensive. She suddenly realised that he perceived her as a threat. This was a bit of a revelation for her. If he felt she was a threat, it was because she could injure him. And neither of them believed that she could take him with a wand. No it was something he had trouble defending himself against. Yet here he was.

And still, he wasn't doing anything. He wasn't sure what to do, she realised. Part of her revelled in the uncertainty she caused him. It meant he wasn't as cold and detached, inhuman as he always seemed. Suddenly she found studying him outweighing the nervousness at the situation. Because she knew he felt the tension that was filling the room, and like her, he couldn't escape it.

He watched intently as she reached up for the zipper of her jacket and slowly pulled it down. There was a part of her that felt powerful in light of this captive audience. She took it off and threw the jacket over another chair, and returned her attention to him.

Somewhere along the way, her fear had gone. It was just her and him now, and really nothing had changed. Because she saw him clearly now. She wasn't sure how but this was some kind of power struggle. One of them had to move.

Hermione's tentative step forward brought him to action and in a flash he was upon her. He grabbed her head and kissed her. It was deep and determined.

She knew this taste. Knew this scent and all the sounds. And it just flowed. There was nothing to fight. She needed more. Much more. She'd been the person who was sure they weren't hungry until they ate something to realise they were absolutely famished.

She wanted skin and went for the buttons what was hiding it away from her touch. His elaborate robes were getting in the way and she resorted to making those buttons comply with force. Which was a bit of a feat as he was distracting her with his ministrations to her neck.

Finally she was rewarded with skin and she let the warmth permeate through her hands and into her, pulling him closer. No not good enough. She leant back a bit and yanked her turtle neck over her head. Now she could really feel the skin. And the sensation brought a huge sigh.

She went for his belt, but he put his hand on hers to stop her.

"Not in here." He said. Hermione couldn't quite understand why. After all, they had done it just about every possible place.

He led her out the door and across the hall to a bed room. That was nice, she thought, but at the moment she didn't really need nice. But the distraction was over when he pulled her to him again. Pulling her mouth to his and she melted back into the warmth of his body.

His skin was soft and smooth over the taunt frame, but he was broader than he was. She knew this, but hadn't been able to feel it before. Explore it with her hands.

His hand came up and cupped her breast which had lost its cover somewhere along the way, and the touch brought on more heat to complement the warmth. Her moan seemed to bring his tongue deeper into her mouth. But her only objective now was to bring more of him inside her.

Her hand returned to the belt she had been distracted from before. The smooth skin against her fingers under the waistband only made her efforts more frantic.

The shifting of weight told her she was on the bed and she fleetingly appreciated the softness of the mattress over a hard wooden floor. But in truth, she didn't give a damned. A bed of broken glass probably would not distract her now, because she only had one need and that was to feel him inside her.

She didn't have to wait long. He was there and she could feel him pushing inside her. The feeling was close to exquisite. And when his length was fully immersed in her, she felt an odd sense of purpose. This felt like every kind of right.

When he moved, the friction brought heat and unbearable, exquisite tension. It really took no time for the tension to overload, driving her body to seek more by reflex like it would avoid pain. She brought her knees up along his hips to bring him in deeper.

She could hear his ragged breath and she knew he was fighting it.

"Don't fight." She urged and she could feel the strain in him leave as he stopped. Now each stroke was bringing them both closer, pushing her harder. She could feel his body starting to tense again, but from the sensations rather than fighting them. The strokes because slow and full, and she couldn't breathe anymore as the sensation of each stroke built on the previous.

One last stroke was all it took for both of them and her body arched into him, as he did into her.

Her orgasm was intense and went on for ages. Her whole body felt like jelly after. She could barely make it move, but didn't try that hard either as his weight on top of her felt delicious.

He stayed put for a while and she didn't mind. Whatever form of awkward they were together, this part was not, far from it actually. If there was only one natural thing in the world, this was it. It was just absolutely everything else that was.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19

She could hear his breathing beside her. He was asleep or close to it. Hermione pulled the sheet closer to her. She was feeling completely conflicted. Part of her felt happy, happy that she had him back, the other part of her was disgusted by herself. She had just slept with a Death Eater. Not to mention that he was her school nemeses' father.

He was lying next to her, completely relaxed without a stitch on him. He was beautiful, he always had been, but more masculine now.

This duality she saw him in was killing her. Because the fact of the matter was that within him was the boy she loved and it was getting harder to separate the two completely. How could she love and hate someone at the same time?

Suddenly, Hermione got out of the bed and started to dress. She wasn't sure what she was doing, but leaving seemed like a reasonable option.

"It's supposed to be a night." He said from the shadows of the room. "Our agreement stipulated a night."

"Are you sure?" She said annoyed. "Maybe we can get a lawyer in to interpret the agreement for us."

He raised himself up on his elbows. "Regrets, Miss Granger?"

"How do you expect me to feel?" She asked almost tearing her shirt as she put it on. "I..."

"I'm not comfortable with this situation." She finished.

"Come now." He said, in the strong steely voice of his. "A few hours won't hurt."

"Everything about this hurts." She said.

"Did I hurt you?" He asked with surprise.

"No." She admitted because he was referring to the physical. "But... what if this doesn't make it better?"

"I'm pretty sure it can't make it worse." He said mirroring her own thoughts from before. He laid back onto the pillows and brought his arm up to support his head. Giving her an unobstructed view of his pale body.

"Maybe for you." She said and turned to leave. She heard the creaking of the bed as he got up behind her. His hand came and covered hers as she reached for the door knob. It wasn't a rough grip, just steady, strong enough to let her know he was there and she couldn't help but feel him behind her even though he wasn't actually touching her.

"Stay." He said quietly. Yet she hesitated because the truth was that she wanted to cry. She wasn't sure why, it's not like she was in terrible distress. She wasn't horrified by what they

had just done, but she had been disconcerted by it. He always seemed to disconcert her. And she had no idea what to do now.

“Stay.” He repeated and leant a little closer. She hated that her body responded so easily.

“Why?” She asked.

He said nothing for a second.

“So we can know that the evening has served its purpose.” He said after a while.

“And what was the purpose again?”

“To exorcise these... desires.”

That left her in a bit of a quandary. She wanted to leave, but if she did, it would say that she didn’t want the quandary exorcised. If she stayed, this mental torture would continue. On some level it really hurt that his only purpose for doing this was to get rid of his feelings.

But she shook herself and distinctly reminded herself that is what she wanted too. Take the tension out what was building into a full blooming obsession.

“Fine.” She said and turned around. He was still standing very close. So tall. Now what? She almost asked. She let him pull her back to the bed by her hand. He rubbed the inside of her palm with his thumb as she laid down on the bed still dressed.

He seemed to want to say something, but couldn’t quite voice what was on his mind.

“I suppose the project never came to fruition.” She said after a while.

“What project?”

“The Blood Replenishing potion we were working on.” She said. “We were making some good headway.”

“Technically the project never existed.” He said.

Hermione wasn’t sure if it was meant to be a cruel statement. She could easily have taken it that way.

“Technically none of it existed, but here we are, dealing with the consequences.” She said looking back at him.

“Maybe if you had not left, we would now have a new Blood Replenishment Potion to present for the benefit of the world.”

“It’d be hard to explain though, wouldn’t it. Lucius Malfoy and Hermione Granger working together for the benefit of medial remedies...”

“It may have some challenges.” He said in what Hermione decided was in reality the closest to non-adversarial she had ever seen him. “Although I am discovering that there are some capacities in which we seem to work well together.”

He was stroking her across her breastbone where her skin that was exposed through her shirt. Let’s not forget why we are here, she reminded herself. This was about sex and as far as he was concerned, it was about nothing but sex.

Something in her wanted to wake the less jaded boy within, the one who saw more to life than the dull view of the world that he now saw. But the man in front of her saw this infliction as something that could be cured with sex, and may be was right. She was not so jaded however and she saw the potential of these feelings. She had seen them bring him to life once before. A time when his eyes would sparkle and he could appreciate the joy in the situation.

A wave of pity and sorrow hit her, and she didn't know what to do with it so she leant in and kissed him. It surprised him a little but he took what was on offer and pulled her closer. For Hermione, this was about giving, trying to heal the wounds he had inflicted upon himself. She knew fully well that he saw the activities in a whole other light, but it didn't matter to her right at that point.

I love you, rushed through her mind, but she had sense enough not to voice it. She wasn't even sure where that came from. Probably the point that mourned the coldness in him. Some weird uttering from a fracture of her brain, because she didn't love him. He was unlovable, she reminded herself.

But the delicious tension rose in her as he pulled her underneath him, cradled by the smell and taste of his skin. This wasn't the rushed affair they experienced earlier in the evening, this was more deliberate, more purposeful in its exploration and appreciation, although the word sat uncomfortably in her brain.

The touch was anything but uncomfortable. It was a clear link with what was. When they touched, everything that had passed outside of that didn't seem to matter.

He slowly divested her of the clothes she so hurriedly put on, exploring the skin underneath, until he got to the last bit of clothing. He kissed her belly and travelled down until her reached her most private area. Hermione gasped as he latched on to her little bundle of nerves and gently sucked. Once he had her bucking with unbearable tension, he released her leaving her to feel the aching absence before returning to her folds and exploring the wetness waiting for him.

Again he brought her to the point of explosion only to leave her in aching need.

"You're teasing me." She finally gasped. "Don't be so cruel."

"You cannot deny me my nature." He said and snaked up towards her.

"I know you, remember." She said. "I know exactly what your nature is."

"Twenty five years is a long time."

"Really? Have you chanced so much? Then you won't mind if I..." She said and forced him over on his back. She knew his nipples were extremely sensitive. She was rewarded with a gasp as his body arched up as she circled her tongue around one.

"Point proven girl." He said through rough gasps. She liked this control she had over him and she was not willing to let it go until he knew full well what she could subject him to. No, she wasn't done. She straddled him and pushed herself down on his shaft making him hiss in pleasure.

She rode him with complete attention to her own pleasure, she really did know him well enough to know how they fit together best. When he was practically squirming underneath

her with his hand on her hips guiding her, she returned to fingers to his nipple and twisted it. He arched up powerfully underneath her with an almost vacant expression in his eyes as he reached a shuddering release.

Seeing him climax was enough to send her over the edge as well. Knowing she had brought it on made her feel powerful. A rush of endorphins hit her brain making her loose contact with all of her senses.

She had never used pain on him before. It was not something she linked with the younger Lucius, but it seemed to suit this one. He did deserve a bit of punishment and he seemed to accept it so well.

They did seem to have reached some quiet understanding afterwards. Maybe it had done the trick. Hermione felt depleted and he didn't argue with her as she dressed this time. He watched her from the darkness again without a word, although the paleness of his skin made him completely visible.

As she was ready to go, she paused for a second, but couldn't think of anything to say. So she left.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20

Hermione had gotten dressed and left pretty much straight away. He didn't stop her, and shortly followed suit.

He returned to his manor and as per usual was met with complete silence except for a few clocks here and there. Draco was undoubtedly out somewhere and Narcissa was in the Mediterranean as per usual. He didn't mind the silence, he was used to it. Silence was good, it meant that there wasn't anything unexpected happening. And now he had solved his little problem.

He poured himself a drink and sat down in front of the fire to muse on it. The girl had been reticent but that was not unexpected. But equally things hadn't gone completely to plan, he had lost control and he didn't like the feeling. There had been a point where she had led and he had no choice but to submit. Even the word hurt.

What should have been the moment of his complete satisfaction left him with this thorn in his side. It was trying to rob him of the soothing feeling of relief, because the relief was true. The obsessive thoughts had been stripped away, he could tell. The affair leaving him with thoughts that were very sexy, which he didn't mind. But then the very last part left him with a disconcerted feeling, like he had shown a part of him he wouldn't show anyone.

Part of him wanted to punish her for it. Another part was worried, warning him to stay away lest she discover this power she had. But she might already know. He wasn't sure. Normally he would be sure that she was too young and too Gryffindor to understand power, but on the other hand, she had travelled back in time and seduced him.

But he didn't mind remembering the events of the evening. They were real events, and they weren't imposed on him against his will. All being said and done, he had gotten control of his thoughts back. Now he could focus more on the task at hand, taking control of the wizarding world. Not in a Voldemort kind of way, just the part that mattered. Particularly the financial parts.

He felt the relief over the next few days as he could focus again. The memories sat there underneath, like a fine secret he could draw on whenever he wanted to. Admittedly, sometimes he wanted to a lot. It was particularly delicious when he ran into Remus Lupin at the Ministry one day. He liked thinking of what he'd been doing to the little Gryffindor mudblood, while engaging in what can only be described as a terse conversation.

There was that little niggles in the back of his mind that truthfully, some of it had been about what she had been doing to him, which was a tinge more disturbing than it was satisfying. If he would only admit it, maybe a little thrilling.

He didn't see or hear from her for quite some time until a Ministry run event to raise funding for Hogwarts. He had to come to fundraisers and give away. It would be noted if he didn't. Sometimes he wished he could just send the money order by owl, but fundraisers was

a perfect time to influence and persuade. He had a few bills he wanted on the legislative agenda.

He saw her across the room standing against a pillar talking to some red head or other. A shimmery sort of dress that covered those glorious curves. There was no denying that he enjoyed tasting every single curve and thinking about it gave him a little rush of energy and anticipation. But it was quickly replaced with a flash of rage as the red head placed his hand on her back.

He hated that he had reacted like a jealous lover, because he was not, he reminded himself. It had been the fulfilment of a contractual agreement with the express purpose to exorcising some stuck thoughts. It was done and it had worked. He should leave well enough alone.

He ended breaking his own rule later that evening when he caught her at the edge of the event sipping a drink.

“Miss Granger.” He said.

“Mr. Malfoy.” She returned after a moment of silence which indicated she wasn’t happy. She turned and put the glass down on a table next to her. He could see the fabric of the dress rubbing against the lush skin underneath. Cheap fabric. Cheap enough to rip if he wanted to. Her curls bounced suggestively as she turned back to face him.

An awkward silence ensued.

“I wouldn’t have expected to see you here.” She said, a statement that could have been interpreted as intimate indicating that she was thinking about him, or just a passing comment.

“A man in my position is expected at such events.” He said. “I am a Governor after all.”

“Of course.” She said with a smile that was meant more for herself than for him. She had been thinking of him, he was sure.

He couldn’t resist the opening she had left him for taking this conversation to a more intimate level. He knew he shouldn’t, but her discomfort brought out his more sadistic side.

“Have you been avoiding me?” He said with a tiny smirk.

She looked him in the eye. “Not really.”

She was challenging him. Trying to tell him that he was easy to dismiss. She looked like there was something else she wanted to say but changed her mind. She wanted to challenge him, but she was backing down. Smart girl.

He took a step closer and placed his finger tips on her hips. He couldn’t quite help himself, wanted to feel the heat of her under his fingers.

“You look lovely this evening, Miss Granger. Have a good evening.” He said before turning away. He was entirely happy with the encounter. He felt like he had addressed the little outstanding control issue.

Hermione spend the day in Diagon Alley the next day. She was still angry after her encounter with Lucius at the party. He was playing some game with her and she didn’t appreciate it. She had determined that it may be better for everyone that they don’t have much

contact now and he had broken that by approaching her. And then playing some domination game with her. But she was the better person and refused to engage with him.

She wouldn't readily admit the rush of adrenalin as he was approaching her. There might have been something else in that rush too, but she was not going to explore it. But it had something to do with the fact that she knew what lay behind that cool exterior, something that wasn't entirely so cool and restrained.

She had known this about the younger him, but she was still having trouble coming to terms with it with regards to the older him. Coming to terms with the fact that they were in essence the same person, but she knew this now, even if she didn't like it. What she hated was that he came over to pick at her wound. Why would he do that?

As much as she hated it, he was again at the forefront in her mind. It was true that their evening together had addressed something, it had turned down the noise a bit, but he was still there in her mind pretty much constantly. Now the plan was to never deal with him again and it will all go away. She was planning on remembering him as a sweet first love, one she left behind in a place far, far away, that didn't really exist just like a fairytale.

Her stomach growled at her to remind her that it needed some attention. She ducked into one of the pubs, intent of getting some food before her body hit that point where she started to feel shaky.

She sat down and placed her bag of books on the chair beside her. It was nice and empty this time in the afternoon. The lunch crowd had gone and the evening crowd hadn't filtered in yet.

"Are you fucking my father?" Came an all too familiar voice above her.

Her head shot up to deny whatever accusation the insane ferret had laid on her, but realised she couldn't. Technically this one, the most insane of all, was true. Kind of. So she had to replace the look of shock with a look away, which only confirmed it really.

"What the fuck were you thinking, Granger. My father? Have you lost your mind?" Draco accused.

Hermione looked around to see if anyone was paying attention to the conversation. She needed him to pipe down so she hushed him.

"It just happened." She said, sure that she was going to get a barrage of crap was over her, but he just looked at her intently.

"Like an accident?" He said in a way that the unbelieving challenged a stupid statement. The way she would have.

She prayed to any power that would listen to her to get her out of this conversation.

"Just once, it will never happen again." She said. "More like a contractual agreement."

That, he seemed to understand. "Then why was he feeling you up at the Hogwarts fundraiser?"

Hermione could only shrug. She didn't know why he'd done it. Feeling her up, was a bit strong, but he had touched her.

“There is no happy ending here.” Draco warned. “My father is a complete bastard. Don’t have any illusions, Granger. He might have been part of your Order, but he hates your kind. And for whatever purpose, he is using you.”

“I know that.” She said. “He has been fairly clear in that regards.”

Draco studied her for a while longer. “So what’s he got on you?”

“Its complicated.”

Draco smiled. “It always is.”

Hermione’s food came to her relief. She tucked into her food, but Draco didn’t take the message to leave.

“Didn’t really think my father had it in him.” Draco said. Hermione could tell that he was checking her out and her skin felt like crawling. It wasn’t obvious, but he was wondering what had caught his father’s attention.

“Just as long as you are aware. There is no future here, he isn’t going to divorce mother and marry you.”

“Don’t worry, Malfoy, I have no illusions.” She said. “Like I said it was a one time thing.”

With that he looked her over again and left. She wasn’t sure but she thought she could hear a small laugh from Draco as he walked away. Which could mean that everyone and their dog would know in about half an hour. Or hopefully Draco knew to stay out of his father’s business. She really, really hoped for the latter.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21

Lucius woke up the next morning wanting her as he typically did these days. And it made him angry, which made him want her even more. His want was different now. Before it was all images, obsession and relentless teasing. Now it was different, tied into something much deeper because she wanted him too and that concept had something to do with who he was as a person.

He was used to being a hated man. People wanted him for his money or influence, but fundamentally under that was the point that he wasn't wanted. And he wasn't really wanted by her either, her 'love' for him had been an accident brought on by some mind bending fuck up. They were both aware that they were stuck in something that wasn't supposed to happen.

He hated thinking about it, it was much easier to focus on the sex. That was tangible, not to mention pleasurable. And it seemed his body craved it. The dubious and unwanted thrill of losing control.

He took care of the immediate craving in the shower, leaving him fit to face the day. He had a world to run, plots to execute. He liked that word, had such a sharp edge to it.

Meanwhile, Hermione needed to study for her NEWTS, they were here and she felt woefully unprepared. He had distracted her so much, she wasn't sure if she was fully prepared. Resulting in a full panic. But she managed to calm down enough to not make a twit out of herself in front of the examiners.

It was strange being back at Hogwarts. Strange seeing Ron and Ginny. Hermione got the feeling that things would never be the same between her and Ron. Like Harry was the glue between them and now that he was gone, they just didn't make sense.

And people treated Ron differently now. Ron was the war hero and everyone in the school liked him. Not everyone perhaps. The Slytherins were sitting and glaring as they usually did. Hermione saw Draco staring at her, which wasn't really out of the norm in this place.

No one had mentioned anything about her choice of bedfellows, so she gathered that he hadn't said anything. She wasn't sure why. He was probably embarrassed, or she could concede that maybe, at his position, it may not be the best idea to go around chatting about who his father was doing. Whatever it was, she like that Draco was tongue tied. She fully imagined it wasn't by choice.

Having everyone glaring at her with hate and mistrust would not be her idea of a good time. And no one would glare at her like Ron would. Probably Ginny too.

Being back at Hogwarts also brought her in contact with Professor Snape, who let's not forget, saw her completely naked. Could this week possibly get any worse?

Actually it could. After her Arithmancy exam, which she was sitting with ten other students, none of which she knew all that well, she ended up walking back to the library

alone. She could have gone to the Great Hall or her common room, but the library reminded her the least of Harry and she didn't need the melancholy distraction right now. She had another exam in an hour.

"Granger." Draco said, leaning up against the wall.

"What do you want Draco?" She said with exasperation. She had the suspicion that he had been waiting for her.

"Just thought we should have a little chat."

"We have nothing to talk about."

"Just wondering if you're still fucking my father."

"It just happened once." She said. "No plans for it happening again."

He laughed, "I just like hearing you say it. I can just imagine you. 'Harder, Mr. Malfoy'. You know if I had known you were that keen on Slytherin cock, I would have made more of an effort."

"You're revolting."

"Maybe, but I got a nice little mental image out of it."

"Please just go fall off a cliff somewhere." Hermione said and kept walking past him. She was deeply embarrassed, but there was nothing she could do about it. What was she supposed to do, stop and convince him that she was actually in love with younger version of Lucius Malfoy and like an addict she was dealing with it by the closest thing, the older Lucius Malfoy. Draco would laugh in her face.

"You know the new law he is working on getting through will exclude muggleborns from Hogwarts." Draco called behind her.

Hermione stopped in her tracks. It was a ridiculous notion.

"Avoids any future messiness." Draco continued behind her. "Just phases them out of this world over time."

"I don't believe you." She said.

"No?" He said with surprise. "He's a Death Eater, Granger, that wasn't an accident. He is not going to change because you are spreading your legs for him."

Hermione turned and searched his face. He was serious as he stared back at her. Not his usual snide malice. Just dead serious.

"Why are you telling me this?"

Draco shrugged. "I told you, don't have any illusions about him."

Hermione nodded. She wasn't going to say thank you, but she accepted that Draco was... trying to help her? No, unlikely. Whatever reason he had, she didn't care.

Her mind was in complete disarray for her next exam. She was hurt and disappointed. Although she couldn't really justify it. Draco was right, what had she expected, that he would

be a lovely man just because she had slept with him. But if he wanted to act against her kind, he could well say it to her face. She wanted to hear it from him. Punish herself for her utter stupidity.

After exams were done, she sent a note with one of the school owls telling him to meet her at the cottage at seven.

Hermione spent the next few hours pacing before flooing to the cottage where they had spent the night together not so long ago.

He showed up soon after seven. She could hear the crackle of the fire heralding his arrival, but she felt his presence like a vibration in the room.

He was dressed in his forbidding black robes, with the white hair perfectly groomed around his shoulders. He made the room seem really small. But she couldn't really distinguish between the older and younger version of him like she could before. And she hated it.

"You called." He said, in the deep rich voice that travelled up her spine. She wanted him and she hated it. Hated herself. Wanting to feel his warm skin under her hands. His weight on her.

She moved across the room to get away from him, get a chance to detach her mind from what her body was saying. It was proving a bit difficult, she was so flushed, she felt like she was about to melt. Deeply that this completely abhorrent man had this effect on her.

"I've heard." She started finally turning to look at him. It distracted her.

"Heard?" He reminded her.

"That you are working to exclude muggleborns from Hogwarts." She finished squaring herself up.

He cocked an eyebrow, but didn't say anything before laying on the intense gaze.

"You don't deny it." Hermione said with a tight little laugh.

"What expectations did you have of me, Miss Granger?" He finally said.

Hermione shook her head. "Honestly, I'm not sure." Which was true. She didn't have any expectations, she had been too caught up with fighting her own feelings to really think about what all this meant in the grander scheme of things.

Their silence purveyed as they stood there squared up. He was so much larger than her, but she would never back down.

"Are you perhaps here to bargain?" He said after a while.

"Bargain?" She said with confusion. It took her a while to understand what he was saying. Bargain? Bargain what? Bargain for him not to proceed? Bargain with what? Sex? Obviously sex, she chided herself.

"Is everything an agreement to you?" She accused.

"Of course."

"You're a pig."

“I am what I am, I would have expected you would have realised this.”

“I hate you.” She said and stormed towards the fireplace. She flooded back to the Burrows and ran up to her room. She was going to cry for a good hour.

He had done this on purpose, to trap her into another agreement. “Fucking bastard”, she screamed into her pillow.

When she calmed down, she recognised that she was too upset to hear his terms. Part of her felt that it didn’t matter, he could not treat her like this, treat people like this, practically blackmailing people to get what he wants.

And what he wants is obviously her. Why couldn’t he just be a normal person and ask? Because she would say no. He might turn her body inside out, but she knew better than to deal with someone like him. Draco was right, there was no future down that path, just misery.

But another part of her, could not let this law pass if she had the ability to stop it. But the price was too steep. It didn’t sound like much, sleep with him and he would kill the law. A quid pro quo. But it wasn’t that easy, he was someone she was quasi in love with, someone horrible. Further contact with him should not be encouraged.

So how far would she go to kill this law? Could she live with herself if she let it pass? Spend the next 60 years watching as none of the muggleborn children were brought to Hogwarts like she was, knowing she could have stopped it. All for a little sex with someone, she admitted really enjoyed having sex with.

But it was a devil’s bargain. She wasn’t sure why or how, but it was. It would cost a lot more than it said on the paper. The devil in these details would be big and probably completely crushing.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22

Lucius hadn't meant to enter into another bargain with the girl, it just happened. He had proposed it and he wasn't entirely sure what he was thinking, it just seemed like a good way to get her in bed. He wasn't used to impulsive decisions and this was a big one. The exclusion of mudbloods wasn't the central issue in his plans, but it was one he had worked on achieving for a while and now he had bargained it away. On an impulse no less. This was why he never dallied with women.

But if she agreed, and she would, he would have her, probably for as long as he wanted. And that would be a nice conquest. He could always deal with the mudblood issue once he was done with her. He wasn't opposed to breaking a promise or two. Because he wasn't quite ready to be done with her yet.

Eventually he would tire of her delicious body and heavenly heat. He knew he could fight it, but he wasn't sure he wanted to, for now. He was getting used to the ever present tension and the glorious relief he gained inside her. It did add a certain spice and as much as he hated it being forced on him, he did like the pleasure in it.

She sent her agreement the next day and knowing she was his now sent shivers of anticipation through him. Like a delicious secret he kept in the back of his mind as he went about his business. It did make the more annoying parts of it more tolerable, because he knew he would spend all his tension in her that night.

Even now as he sat in a meeting with some idiotic Ministry official discussing the Gringott's supervisory rules, he could achieve what he wanted without having to result to his typical viciousness. If the twit across the table was trying his temper he would just imagine the mudblood girl naked, waiting and willing, and it would send a jolt of pleasure through him.

He waited until later that evening, past the time they were supposed to meet. He wanted her there when he came, waiting. And she was. Nervous. Dress in muggle clothes. No matter, he would soon relieve her of them.

In fact he proceeded to right away. She wanted to talk, but he wasn't paying attention. He wasn't interested in talking. A flush was building on her face and down her neck. She had stopped talking now and he had her full attention. He wanted to feel her skin and her softness, but he slowed as she had started to undress him, savouring the slight touches as she dealt with his shirt buttons.

He wasn't going to make it to the bedroom. He was going to have her on the sofa.

He dealt with her small undergarments and soon she was naked in all her glory. And she was ready for him.

Unclasping his belt and pushing the cloth out of the way, he was ready. The sensation was overwhelming as he entered her heat. It made all the hair on his body stand on edge. Everything about him was standing on edge, the most glorious edge.

It did take long at all, she was coming, he could feel her clenching around him, see her arching beneath him with breathy groans which travelled straight down his spine sending him over the slippery edge he had found to the explosion of pleasure.

How on earth had he not found this before? In this moment, it was everything and until she came along he had never realised it existed.

As his senses returned to some semblance of normal, he lay on her completely enveloped in her lovely earth scent. Her body was cool with sweat and he didn't want to withdraw. So he stayed.

Inside her, he was something else, something other than a Malfoy, the identity that rules his life, make every decision for him, what he believed, who he dealt with, what he said, who he married. But for an instance, in the confines of her body, he is something else. Perhaps the person stripped of the heavy duty he carried.

He shouldn't be doing this. It was against the rules, the Malfoy identity. But he had been a good boy all his life, done everything that was expected of him. He had an heir he had raised right, promoted the family's cause relentlessly and he had set the family up well for its future success. He deserved this small respite.

He had her again that night. And the next night, and the one after. He hadn't meant to spend every night in the cottage, but he did.

He had even managed to get her to stay the night, because he wanted to have her first thing in the morning. She had argued at first, but she relented.

Now she was laying on the bed, the white sheet half covering her nakedness as she read a book she found in the back of the bedside table. Her foot was grazing his arm absentmindedly as she read.

He appreciated her thirst for knowledge, revelled in the things he could teach her. Watches as the wild curls graced the creamy skin of her back, watched the curves of her backside that was barely covered by the sheet. Amazed that she had little idea of what power she had over men.

He was even more amazed that Snape had never been seduced by that unrelenting thirst. Although he knew that Snape would never afford himself to a student. It must be difficult, he conceded, showing such restraint when such nubile creatures were exploring their budding sexuality. Then again, maybe Snape was like he had been, completely unconvinced of the absorbing pleasures of bedroom sports. Although he could not see how any man could look past the creature in his bed right now. He certainly couldn't and nothing had ever really appealed to him before.

He wanted her to move into the cottage, but she refused. He was pretty sure she had not told anyone of their dalliance, but her nightly absences must be noticed. Draco had certainly noticed his.

Their existence continued in this fashion and it suited him well. He would have liked her there all the time, but on the other hand, it might be a good thing that she wasn't there during the day. It might prove too tempting.

The hour after dinner was the most trying. He would typically sit in his study with a nice port and wait until it was time to go.

"Darling." Narcissa said from the door. A term she had always used, but seemed to only highlight the stark deficiencies in their marriage.

"Cissa."

"Draco tells me you are gone each night. Things have progressed with the girl then."

"Yes." He responded, feeling uncomfortable with the situation.

"I'm glad." She said and sat down. "It will do you good."

"How is Javier?" He said, trying to change the topic of conversation.

"Well. Visiting his mother."

"So, you have her installed somewhere?" Cissa asked while picking some lint off her skirt.

"Not yet." He said. "I'm not sure this is an appropriate conversation, Cissa."

"Nonsense." She said with a laugh. "We may never have had a marriage in anything other than name, but I do care for your wellbeing. I would like to know you are in good hands. She is too young for my liking and if I had my way, I would have chosen someone more suited to what you can offer."

"More suited?" He repeated.

"Unfortunately you have chosen a girl who isn't impressed by your influence or wealth. Likely, cannot be impressed by baubles or sweet compliments."

"I did not chose her." Lucius said, feeling under attack. "She was just..."

"No, from your perspective, I gather you didn't." Cissa laughed. He hated being laughed at. "It is not surprising that a man like you would be dragged kicking and screaming into love."

"I don't love..."

"It is more unusual that both parties are, but there you go, what can you do?"

"There is nothing that can be done?" He asked, curious what the more experienced party would say.

"Please, Lucius, you would have done it by now."

That was true, he would have done anything to avoid the events of the last few months.

"So I just have to deal with it." He said.

"Yes."

"You said it would pass." He said.

“Did I?” She said. “For me it often did, but for you, I don’t know. You are not naturally disposed to fleeting romances, so it may not. Javier and I have been together close to nine years now and it does not look like it will waver. Perhaps it is age.”

“But she is young.” Lucius said.

“Yes, unfortunately.” Cissa said. “As I said, she will likely not be distracted with baubles and fineries. She is young, she will want a husband and child before long. You will not hold her attention... unless you provide it.”

“Out of the question.” He said with an undignified huff.

“Then it only a matter of time before she slips away, through your fingers.” She said. “I am of course amenable to a divorce, provided I can carry on in a fashion I am used to.”

Lucius huffed again. Malfoys did not divorce. He knew that when he married her, and so did she. But he picked up the warning Cissa was trying to give him. But he had no choice, the scandal would be enormous.

No, he would just have to tire of her before the day she tired of him. But the idea of him not tiring scared him. Particularly if she left him behind.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23

Every time Hermione left Lucius, she intended for it to be the last time she was with him. But somehow, during the day, her need and tension built up and she was practically pacing the room by the time dinner came around. She just couldn't stop going. It was just one more time she told herself.

She was purposefully ignoring analysing how she felt about it, about him. She didn't really know what was worse, what she was doing or who she was doing it with. She was going with a married man. His marriage was shit, but it still was a marriage. Or the fact that he was a pureblood snob of the worst kind. And one who still believed in his superiority.

But her resolve just melted away. Seeing him just melted her. She was like an addict with her fix in sight.

It was so much easier to just think of it as sex. Spectacular, amazing sex. She was trying really hard to think of it as nothing more. Absolutely forbidding herself from think of anything it could be. Because it couldn't.

On the other hand, there was so much she wanted to ask him. He knew so much. He knew how this world works, he knew the politics, and he probably knew all the things that she wasn't allowed to know. She wanted to explore every nook and cranny of his absolute belief in his superiority, to find the kinks and paradoxes. She really, really wanted to challenge everything he believed in.

She wanted to know why this world would forgive him just about anything. How an intelligent and reasonable person can get caught up with someone like Voldemort. She wanted to know if he was sorry for what he'd done.

But she didn't ask him any of these things. This was about sex, awesome sex, but talking would only drag her deeper into this thing. The thing that was something else under the surface. So she left as she always did.

Ron and Ginny were home now and surprise, surprise, they were starting to notice her constant after dinner absences. They were both eyeing her up as she finished her dinner and got up.

"Where are you going?" Ron said. "You go out a lot."

"Ummm." Hermione started.

"She is help Madam Mellstone with chores." Mrs. Weasley said to Hermione's astonishment. Hermione didn't even know Madam Mellstone, but apparently Ron and Ginny did.

Hermione had no idea why Mrs. Weasley had provided her with... an alibi. It did suggest that Mrs. Weasley knew that she was up to no good. Which was true, she was up to no good.

Instead of staring at her like a fish out of water, Hermione left feeling very uncomfortable. As she apparated into the cottage, all those concerns left her mind. She knew he was there. She wasn't sure how, she sensed him somehow, maybe unconsciously she could smell him. Relief washed over her like his presence always did, wiped her mind of any worry and filled her with anticipation.

He never made her wait long. They seemed to come together like two magnets. Always a little rushed the first time. Usually there was a second, slower, more deliberate. It was the second time that sometimes made her a little uneasy, because it was different. It was the one that hinted a little more than just animalistic sex. Slow caresses that made her feel like this is how things should be between a man and a woman. A man and a woman that were supposed to be together, which obviously they weren't.

What was downright scary was that she knew this man could fill all her needs. Including intellectually, in a way that she hadn't found anyone else. Probably fill them perfectly, but he just wasn't willing. And on some level, she was in love with him, and she was terrified of getting herself stuck, having what she wants just there, but unable to get have it and unable to leave. No this really must end, she told herself.

She really missed peace of mind. She still had precious little of it. He was still a feature in her thoughts all the time, but as a dull ache rather than the all encompassing obsession it was.

Hermione was avoiding Molly the next day. She had a good idea what the conversation would be and she didn't want to have it.

But her luck ran out in the garden and Molly walked around the corner with her garden basket. If Hermione bolted, it would be blatantly obvious she was avoiding her and that would be rude. And above all else, one cannot be rude.

Nothing was mentioned and Hermione was beginning to hope that this conversation would not happen after all.

"So you are seeing him then." Molly finally said.

"Who?" Hermione tried hopefully, but the look from Molly chided her.

"I do recall your time at school, you know." Molly said as she started picking peas off the vines. "You were so insanely in love with him, it was dripping off you."

Hermione tried to snort, she hadn't been aware that her involvement with him was even noticeable. Somehow Molly's declaration that she was insanely in love should be offensive considering who they were talking about, but who was she kidding, she was completely in love with him. And seemingly too absorbed to notice that everyone else had noticed too.

Hermione didn't know what to say.

"He is not a good man." Molly said. "Not someone I would wish you to be involved with."

Hermione couldn't argue, so she just stared at the pebble she was moving around with her shoe.

"But I know how overwhelming love can be." Molly said with a sigh. "And with him, not a good situation to be in."

"I'm not in love with him, its just... for a little time. It will finish soon."

Molly stared at her like she was trying to work her out.

"You should be with someone your own age." Molly said. "Someone you have a future with."

"I know." Hermione said and she certainly wasn't going to argue with that statement. If only there was someone remotely interesting.

Molly seemed satisfied with the responses she was getting from Hermione. She said something about getting tomatoes and walked off.

Hermione wanted to cry from the tension. She felt like she had just gotten caught doing something bad, but on the other hand it hadn't gone as bad as she would have anticipated. Molly knew and hadn't yelled at her for being completely, unbelievable subversive. Ron would, Ginny probably would too. She wasn't sure how Ginny felt. Lucius had been active part of the Order in the end and instrumental in Voldemort's downfall, but Voldemort's downfall was also Harry's.

There was no upside here, no possible justification. This had to end.

Things were going well as far as Lucius was concerned. He had bargained away the Mudbloods' inclusion at Hogwarts for the meantime, but other than that the post war world was working out well. In fact he was dealing with a new sensation, a feeling of being content. It was an odd feeling, subtle and soft.

If anything was annoying him, he would just think of her. But there was a storm cloud on his mental horizon. He couldn't quite define it, but his wife's words about not all being well was bothering him. He was not after all the most intuitive when it came to women and their feelings. He knew how to manipulate them, but he was smart enough to know that manipulation was about actions and not about feelings.

The girl came every night, but she was getting a little more withdrawn, which bothered him. If only he could just give her some jewellery and be assured of her loyalty. This girl was not one to be impressed or swayed with jewellery. Damned bad luck that.

In the confines of the bed, she gave everything, but as soon as it was over, she started to turn away. The time she stayed after was starting to grow shorter.

A few weeks later when she told him that she would be going away for a few weeks to Sardinia with her friends, he was surprised. Primarily because it would mean he would have to go without for what seemed like a really long time. But also because she could leave him. And apparently so easily. Too easily.

He could not find a strategy to argue for her to stay. It would make him seem weak and would highlight the leverage she had over him. He was not in the habit of pointing out leverage to other people. In fact he had worked most of his life to ensure that there was as little possible leverage that others could utilise against him. Leverage was dangerous. He should know, he was an expert at utilising it with others.

So all he could do was watch as she got excited about her trip to the warm Mediterranean island. He had little experience with vacations. He did kind of wonder what it would be like

to spend a week with her. In a room together, talking, eating, exploring and then what they did best. Five days in a row with nothing else. He couldn't even imagine. He would have liked to have dinner with her sometime. Talk to her the way they used to talk in his memories. He would annoy her just to watch her get angry, watch the flush creep up her neck and cheeks, before the impassioned tirade as she argued her corner.

She was good at arguing. Too passionate to make for a politician. Too soft for its brutal compromises. He actually spent a lot of time thinking about her future and what kind of work would fulfil her without hurting her. She needed something to occupy that mind of hers, but it had to be something that wouldn't take too much from her. He wouldn't like to see her broken.

But more to the point, he needed to find a way of stopping her from slipping away because at the moment it felt like she was slipping through his fingers. His instinct was to grip on tight, but his reason knew it was the wrong thing to do. He wasn't quite sure what the right thing was, but he couldn't go back to the way his life used to be. That would be unbearable now.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24

Sardinia was lovely and warm. Not that her companions noticed much. They spent pretty much the whole time either drunk or nursing massive hangovers. Hermione could handle sitting in a bar for about an hour before getting bored, while the others never seemed to stray from their claimed table.

Ron tried it on one night with all his drunken charm, which Hermione didn't feel was charming in the least. In the end, he ended up in Lavender's eager and giggling embrace. Ginny would start crying as the evening progressed and Dean would try to comfort her. And so it went pretty much every night. Neville was a little more reasonable, but he still enjoyed hanging out at the bar. However, in the mornings he was well enough to go sightseeing or swimming with her.

Seamus had taken a shine to Luna and was trying his best. It seemed to occupy Neville a fair bit, to the point where Hermione started to wonder if he was in love with Luna. Well, she could sympathise, love sucked.

As much as it completely sucked, she kind of missed Lucius. Sometimes when Neville was doing something else, she would talk to Lucius in her head about the things she saw and experienced. She couldn't quite imagine his dark and imposing form on these Mediterranean streets and alleys. He seemed to utterly suited to the cold and the dark.

Mostly she wondered what he was doing. She wondered if he cared that she wasn't there, if it bothered him. She didn't think he would see anyone else and she realised that she actually didn't like the thought. She thought about him a lot when she was lying in bed at night. She shared a room with Ginny, but Ginny only really came to change clothes.

Hermione keenly felt the distance between herself and her friends. The fact that she wasn't getting sloshed every night only showcased the distance. Maybe it was Harry who glued them together and now it didn't make sense anymore. The thought really hurt because she felt like she was drifting further away. Like it had been Harry that anchored her to the wizard world and that it was all slipping away from her.

She was still living at the Burrow, but what was she going to do now? Maybe it was time to get a job and start being independent, but secretly she was worried that if she left the Burrow, she would just not belong in the wizard world anymore. She could have a job and a place, but what if she never really fit in, just existed slightly out of step.

It made her a little jealous of Lucius, the natural insider, who so obviously reminded her that she was a natural outsider. No matter how much she knew and how hard she tried, she was still a natural outsider. Stuck between two worlds, not really belonging in either.

She chided herself for her ridiculous fears. She was intelligent and capable, she would do well anywhere, she told herself. There would always be people who needed capable people.

So all in all, Hermione's vacation had not been the relaxing and fun couple of weeks she had been hoping for. In fact, it had only pointed out some painful worries.

She was actually looking forward to getting back, although dreading it on some level too. Because she needed direction and she didn't have any. She didn't intend on seeing him the first night back, but ended up sending a quick note as the evening got closer. She just wanted to see him. It had been so long.

Lucius was glad when he got a note from her. An irrational part of him was worried that she wouldn't come back, not that he ever admitted or gave credence to any of his more irrational thoughts. But he did ache for her. Cursed her cruelty for denying him. But he certainly was not going to pick a fight with her now. Tonight was for re-acquaintances.

Her skin was golden and tanned. He felt a flash of anger as he realised that she must have been exposing a fair bit of her skin to get such an all-encompassing tan. Which meant people, probably the snivelling little Gryffindor boys, had seen it.

He traced her tan lines. He had never really seen tan lines before. No one he had seen naked had ever really been exposed to the sun in such a way. He knew pretty much which parts she had been covering and it was pretty sexy. But those Gryffindor boys bothered him intensely.

"Have you been with anyone?" He asked as he had her beside him on the bed, responding to each and every touch. He asked with an intensity that almost worried him.

"No." She said and kissed him.

Relief washed over him. He needed to know, he could not bear not knowing and he wouldn't have known what to do if she'd said yes. But he didn't need to know, she was his. So completely wantonly his, he realised as he sunk into her warm and welcoming body. He couldn't live without this.

He knew just what she needed to make her moan, building the intensity until she'd grind against him, milking him towards his release. But hearing her come was his undoing. He marvelled at how beautiful it was, how beautiful she was. Life was just beautiful. Things made sense in the confines of this bed, art, poetry, nature made sense. Things he had never really seen before. He could see that now that he wasn't spending so much time fighting it.

She didn't leave immediately. Instead lay there staring into the darkening room.

"Did you miss me?" He asked. He was trying to tease, but it wasn't teasing in the end.

"Yes." She said.

Honesty, he thought, while he basked in the admission. She was silly for being honest, it gave people leverage. His would have said no if she had asked. It wasn't true, he had missed her deeply every night, but to admit it wasn't in his nature. But saying no would push her away and he didn't want that. He wanted things to stay as they were, but the last few weeks had given him an insight that this state was precarious and could easily tip out of kilter.

He knew now that having her be with someone else was not an option, which meant pushing her away was not an option either. That might push her into some young Gryffindor's arms. Arms he would then have to tear off. Which would be messy.

It all provided a big dilemma. Keep her here, but not wanting to reveal any weaknesses, like wanting her. One was deeply unpleasant and the other was simply not an option. The time to wish he wasn't in this predicament was now exhausted, he didn't serve himself by not acknowledging it.

"I must concede." He started. "Your trip precipitated an idea that it might be nice to... go away sometime,... together."

She turned her gaze to him, looking confused.

"Do you mean us?" She said incredulously. "Go somewhere together?"

He didn't respond. It was a bit of a ridiculous idea and he hated that he brought it up, but he still kind of wanted to. The idea of spending a whole night together was intriguing. Having her first thing in the morning. Showing her things and watching her.

Her frown seemed to soften after a while to be replaced with a slight brow lift as she considered it further. She was thinking about it which was good. He hated being there waiting for her to respond.

"It is a big step." She said. "I am not sure steps..."

"It is just a weekend." He said.

"I am just not sure that we should take this thing out of this cottage." She said.

He understood what she was saying, but was also offended. If anyone should be treating this as a dirty little secret, it was him. He was Lucius Malfoy for Merlin's sake, who's reputation would not be improved with the general public knowing he was carrying on with a mudblood girl. Actually on some levels it would, it would actually cover a lot of suspicions in some quarters, but there was a part that bristled against this weakness of his.

But he had been much more forthcoming of this relationship than she had. His wife knew, his son knew, his best friend knew, even his lawyer knew. She had not told anyone as far as he could gather. The rational part of him understood completely, but the irrational part was offended.

Actually, he thought he was due a concession from her.

"I have to go to Austria in just over a week and would like you to come with me."

She looked uncertain, but she did nod. He was pleasantly surprised that he didn't have to coerce her. Although he wasn't really sure how. For all her honesty, there didn't seem to be all that much leverage in it. But it was all the concession he was going to get apparently, because she got up and left quietly.

But he was still thrilled. He lay back on the pillows and considered this time together in Austria. He felt like an idiot, but he wanted to impress her. He had absolutely no experience with taking women away, other than Narcissa, who pretty much took care of herself. Although Narcissa had ample experience regarding little trips with her lovers. Maybe he would have to consult Narcissa about how he would plan this.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25

Hermione wasn't sure why she'd said yes to going away with Lucius. She regretted it instantly. She knew that this relationship should not go to the next level, but on the other hand, she was feeling like she was losing grip on this world. And he was kind of the centre of it. Although she didn't want this to progress, she still didn't want to lose him.

Say what you will about him, he was the first person she ever fallen in love with. And somehow, not having him around would hurt. She had already lost Harry, she felt like she was losing everyone else and he would be the only person who would object if she quietly slipped away.

As it had been since the moment she met him, he left her utterly confused. Although all seemed pretty clear when he touched her. Hermione was slightly embarrassed about that, but it was true.

So she packed a change of clothes and some toiletries into her shrinkable bag and agreed to meet him at the International Portkey Department. She was very conscious about being seen in public with him in case someone would see her. Although the only people who would really care would be Ron and Ginny. Others might raise an eyebrow, but her part in the war, since she had missed much of it, was largely forgotten.

The porting was long and just as uncomfortable as the last time, although Lucius held onto her which avoided the slam to the ground.

Everything was different in Austria, the sun was brighter, the air was lighter, the buildings were brighter and it just had a different feel.

Lucius led her down a street. This was obviously the wizarding part of Vienna, a part she had never seen on postcards or TV. It was quite different from wizarding Britain. The buildings were mostly stone and stone washed as opposed to the UK's wooden buildings.

He finally turned into a large structure with a magnificent large space inside. It must be the hotel. The hotel staff showed them straight through to an elevator. Then down a corridor into a large room before discreetly disappearing. The hotel seemed to be decorated in forest green and gold throughout.

A large white bed with gold trimming occupied the centre of the room. Hermione felt uncomfortable. She wondered what the staff thought of her, actually she had a pretty good idea what they thought. And she hated it.

"Have you been here before?" She asked.

"Once or twice." He said looking out the window, while Hermione wondered if this is where he brought women. She felt sick.

"I do business here sometimes." He said. "Here is a significant financial industry here. Some of which I must meet shortly. I will be a couple of hours, then when I return, we will go to dinner at a restaurant nearby. Magnificent restaurant, you will like it."

"Will I?" She said, a little absently.

"So in the meantime, settle in, have a bath or a nap and I will be back shortly." He said with a smile then left.

Hermione still felt uncomfortable in this room. It must have been awfully expensive. All the furniture looked antique. She didn't want a bath or a nap. After looking out the window at the street below, she decided to read. She had taken an interest in the witch trials lately. Some of it was awful with innocent girls being murdered. Most had no actual witch involvement, but there were some witches who enjoyed baiting witch hunters; baiting men who wanted them dead.

Once she started reading, Lucius seemed to be back before she knew it.

"You always read, don't you?" He said.

"Yes."

"Must you know everything?"

"Not everything."

"What topics don't interest you?" He asked leaning against the door.

"Hurting people." She said.

"The Dark Arts." He said. "Then how can you defend yourself if someone tries to practice it on you."

"Why would anyone want to?"

He smiled. "People do all sorts of things for all sorts of reasons."

"Why are you interested in the Dark Arts?"

"Several reasons. Defence. Family tradition."

"Manipulation?"

"Sometimes." He said. "We've had this discussion before." He said, which was true, they had when he was younger.

"Just wanted to see if your perspective has changed."

"I don't think so." He said. "Now it is time to go to dinner. I am afraid that it is somewhat more formal."

"I didn't bring anything more formal." Hermione said.

"We can fix that." He said and pulled out his wand. "If you would allow me."

Hermione felt uncomfortable with him having his wand on her, part fear, part thrill. She did trust him, she knew that. But he was so capable of other things. And there was the

undeniable fact that she couldn't take him in a straight duel. Not by a longshot.

He transformed her robes into a more formal one, more feminine. It was dark, with shimmer, and hugged her curves.

"There is something very satisfying about dressing a woman." He said. It sounded like a realisation. "Now the shoes."

He didn't do any outer robes for her so she felt the chill when they stepped outside.

"You are cold." He said. "You will have to share my robes." He said and lifted his outer robes up and around her shoulder.

"You did this on purpose." She said as she had to revert to snuggling in.

"I might have." He said and led her down the street. "Deviousness has its rewards."

They reached the restaurant shortly. Again opulent with a dark glow. Well designed in the way that lets you forget that there were other patrons there.

"Do you like seafood?" He asked.

"Yes."

"Then I will order the bass for you." He said and proceeded when she didn't object.

She wasn't used to men ordering for her.

"Do you always order for women?" She asked once the waiter was dispatched.

"It is the etiquette."

"Here."

"In the UK too."

"Amongst your set?" She said. "I have never come across it before."

"Well you have been thoroughly abused."

That made her laugh.

"We are so very different." She said. An acknowledgement that there were worlds between them.

"Not so different." He said. "On some levels, I think we are very much alike."

Hermione didn't believe him. Sure they both really like sex with each other, but that did not make two people alike.

"You belong to another world."

"And you belong to none." He said. It stung. The wellspring of his prejudice. They've had this discussion before too. It was very close to hitting something very raw. It left her quiet for a while.

"But you are more authentic." He said after a while. "You do not follow the well trodden path with rules of expectations. Everything is new to you."

She didn't know what he meant, but got the feeling that it was a compliment.

"In fact you break all the rules." He continued with a smile.

"Do I?" She said. "I hadn't noticed."

"That is the point. You do not know the rules. And I dare say, you don't care. I suppose that is the prerogative of someone in your position."

"I can do what I want?"

"Yes."

Hermione hadn't exactly looked at it that way.

"It must be quite liberating to not have any expectations or duties." He said. "What are your parents' expectations of you?"

"To be happy." She said.

"See, not really an issue on concern in my society." He said. "In fact, it is the first thing sacrificed."

Hermione knew he was telling her something important here. But it was disrupted by the arrival of the meal. And it really was exquisite. The fish just melted in her mouth and the creamy sauce was almost sinful.

"Did you like it?" He asked, when she'd finished.

"It was the best fish I have ever had." She said honestly. Well it was on par with that one in a street restaurant in Thailand once, but that did not need to be mentioned.

"Well, we make up with our shortcomings with exquisite food." He said. "That is why so many of us have indulged more than we should have."

He obviously wasn't talking about himself because there were no signs of indulgence on him. Then again, she couldn't really recall a time when he'd indulging himself with food or even drink.

"Dessert?" He asked.

"I don't think I could if I tried."

He nodded and suggested they go for a walk. The strategy of under dressing her now seemed to have its benefits again as she had to snuggle in under his arm and robe to be sufficiently warm.

It was dark outside and along with a full stomach, it made her much more relaxed. She was enjoying having him next to her. Walking the dark streets of a foreign city with the night ahead of her. She knew full well how this night would end and there was no rush in getting to the inevitable but awaited conclusion.

"Let me show you something." He said and steered her towards a building. Again an opulent building.

"Are all buildings this nice here?" She asked.

“It is the style for this area.” He said. “Most of the buildings here are almost three hundred years old. There was a major reconstruction after the 1731 war. So many of the buildings are of that era.” He said as they walked up a set of stairs.

He took her into a large room. A gallery of some sort. Full of art on the wall. Art that wasn’t moving.

“These are muggle paintings.” She said. Not sure what this was. She looked at them for a while. They were good. They were really good.

She saw one in particular.

“This looks like a Van Gogh.” She said looking at a painting she had never seen before. What was this?

“It is a Van Gogh.”

“No, it can’t be. This is an unknown painting.” She said to her amazement.

“Well, it is well known in some circles.” He said.

Hermione moved onto the other painting and they were all really good. Classical paintings that should have been in a museum.

“But the world must know about these.” Hermione said.

“No, they are our paintings, our history.”

“But they are muggle.”

“They were all painted as part of the magical community.”

“Are you saying Van Gogh was a part of the magical community?” She said incredulously.

“For a short while.” He said. “I particularly like this one. This was painted by a nun in by the name of Sister Maria.”

“I don’t think I have heard of her.”

“No, I think not.” He said. “She was quite an artist and she was known for a little while in the muggle world, but all of her paintings were retrieved by a wizard by the name of Malthus Becktisher, along with her.”

“Retrieved?” Hermione repeated trying to understand what he was saying.

“Wizardkind have always coveted the genius found in the muggle world.” He said. “Sometimes the paintings as in the case of Van Gogh, but more often than not it is the artist itself. In the case of Sister Maria, Malthus took her and kept her.”

“Took her?” She said. “Do you mean he kidnapped her?”

“He eventually seduced her.” He said. “They lived together for almost 70 years. Not all of them end such. Some were held against their will.”

Hermione looked around at the scores of paintings.

“And this is a gallery of muggle artists that were ‘taken’?”

“No, it is a homage to the genius of the muggle world and how that genius is irresistible to the wizard world.” He said. “The muggle and the wizard world have a long history.”

“Why are you showing me this?” Hermione said, not sure what his point was.

“All of these wizards were severely censured for their deeds, but there is a strong precedence of obsession with muggles.” He said. “Not that its discussed or ever condoned, but it is part of our history.”

Hermione still didn’t understand.

“Not something that is shown to children, but some of these wizards, witches as well sometimes, gave up everything for the pursuit of their muggles. At a loss of their standing, their families and their prospects.” He said. “It is not so uncommon now. Marriages between wizards and muggles are quite common, almost accepted, but back then, it was absolutely unacceptable. But they would still do it. I never understood why they would injure themselves such.”

Hermione let him talk. She was a bit shocked by what she was seeming, but he was trying to make a point.

“I never understood that drive.” He continued, talking more to himself. “To give up everything.” He finished quietly.

“It is not an uncommon story anywhere.” She said. “People have sacrificed for love since the beginning of time.”

“Is that what it is?” He asked. “Love?”

“What else would it be?” She said. “Can we go?”

This place was creeping her out. She wasn’t sure why. Old stories of obsession and misdeed. Why had he shown this to her? Is this how he explained their pairing, a muggle obsession?

Chapter 26

Chapter 26

They walked around Vienna for a while. Hermione was tucked in under his outer robes, huddled against his body heat. He should have brought her back sooner, but he was enjoying himself too much. Enjoyed having her cling to him, depend on him and then the anticipation of what was to come. The leisurely night they had ahead of them.

There was no question what would happen that night. It was a given and Lucius was basking in its deliciousness. There was no nagging concern that she wouldn't show, that someone would steal her attention away or convince her otherwise. There was nothing to worry about this evening.

Finally he couldn't take it any longer and they returned to the room. They didn't bother turning on the lights. There was sufficient light from the street outside. He played with the straps on her dress, the cool material contrasting the warm skin underneath. He could hear her breathing deepen.

Lucius loved having sex with Hermione. It had evolved over time, at first it was about the sensations his body craved. He still got that satisfaction, but his attention was increasingly on her. He watched, heard and felt how her body responded when he touched her. First stroking her skin, feeling the goosebumps that followed his touch. Bask in her heady scent. Taste her skin.

On some level, she was fighting the sensation. Or fighting their effect on her. Sometimes she would shudder as he stroked her. He knew there on some level was something about their relationship that she found distasteful. He didn't like it, but he also knew that she was compelled to be here. She loved him, or some part of him. It was an odd thing.

He was having her ride him tonight. He liked being able to see her. See the point where her reservations ceased to be, the point where she lost control and ceased to be about anything other than her desire for him. That point where he encompassed her entire world. He couldn't deny that it drove him, as did the knowledge that he could control her through sex.

In those moments were unfolding a deeper desire. The desire to own her completely. True and complete ownership that can only come by him making her breed. But that could not be. They were both protected against that occurrence, but he could not help but let his imagination claim the idea. It fed something in him. He hated that it wasn't true, wasn't authentic, or that he couldn't ignore the deep desire for it. For everyone to know she was his, it being proven by her belly. But he couldn't have that. He saw the truth and the logic of it most of the time, it was just now, when he was insider her with her complete submission that it rubbed against the grain.

She was coming again, he could feel it, feel her body tensing and he went with it. Allowed his own release deep inside her as he felt her tightly to him. Her groans continued for quite

some time before things calmed down. The urge to sleep was overwhelming. He wanted her to stay, sleep together like this, but she moved away as sleep claimed him.

He woke a little while later. She was sleeping next to him, with her back to him. He could hear her slow even breathing. He traced the curves of her side with his fingers. Her skin was so smooth, so beautiful. It felt good having her there with him. She smelled so good and her body had the comforting warmth that only sleep can bring.

It had been the perfect evening. And he had tomorrow to look forward to. He was going to have sex with her first thing in the morning, then a relaxed breakfast in the room, before they went out and did something. They would return to England in the evening. He wished morning would come now, but it was still hours away. Eventually he fell asleep.

Hermione returned to the Borrow late Sunday evening. The house was very quiet as Ginny was asleep and Ron was spending the night somewhere. Hermione tried to avoid Molly, who probably knew quite well that she hadn't been visiting with her parents that weekend.

Hermione hated the lying and the hiding. It was exhausting, and she felt drained. The weekend had been wonderful, but she felt drained. Not from physical exhaustion, although she was pretty exhausted, but for emotional exhaustion. She had been working so hard not to be in love with him. It would be so much easier if she could just stop seeing him, but she just couldn't. She just melted when he touched her and her whole body tingled whenever he looked at her.

All this with the inescapable knowledge that this was all going to end very badly. He would tire of her, she would be completely in love with him and everyone would know and think she was the whore of the century. That kind of bad. But being the brightest witch of her age didn't seem to give her the ability to extract herself from this situation. Because give it 24 hours and she craved him so badly she couldn't see straight.

She decided the only thing she could do at this point was to stop thinking about it. That would be a start, if she could stop thinking about it all the time, then maybe she could actually work herself up to doing something about it.

Lucius had a good week. He saw his girl in the evenings although they had to forgo one evening as he had a business dinner he couldn't ignore. Although he was resentful throughout the dinner, he noted. There was an event on tonight. She would be there and he wasn't sure if he would see her after. He hoped so.

It was a Ministry event to celebrate the successes of their world after the difficulties recently. All the Order of the Phoenix members were invited, as was most dignitaries and society stalwarts.

He saw her across the room. She was with people her age, people from her house at school he surmised. She wore a dress, it was not particularly revealing, but he could see the outlines of her body underneath. He was pretty sure that the boy she was talking to could as well. He didn't like it one bit, and it really hit home when the boy touched her arm. Fury was boiling in him at the impertinence of the boy.

He had the inclination to find out who the boy was and ruin his life. But he was staring and he had to stop, or someone would remark.

He kept track of her while keeping his conversation going with the Head of Magical Law. She was still talking to the boy and he was fuming. The boy was making her laugh now.

He excused himself when she was her walk towards the restrooms. He reached her as she walked behind a pillar.

"I don't like you talking to that boy." He said. He was pretty sure that boy had dishonest intentions.

"What?" She said.

"That boy you were talking to, I don't like the look of him."

"Seamus?" Hermione said with astonishment. Then after a few seconds, she said, "No! You do not get to be jealous."

"I am not jealous." He said with indignity.

"I will not tolerate jealousy." She said. "He is my class mate, he is my friend and you do not get a say in who I talk to or what I do." She was angry, she was trying not to yell.

"You do not know what this boy's intentions are." He defended herself. "I am just watching out for you."

"I am perfectly capable of watching out for myself." She said. "Particularly around my friends."

She turned on her heel and walked away. He hated that she had dismissed him. He hated that she had not heeded his well meant advice. He was not jealous.

When she returned to her group of friends she was talking to another boy now. A boy that was very attractive. She shot him an angry look at one point.

Maybe at a stretch he could concede that perhaps he had overreacted slightly. He still didn't like those boys looking at her. He was a boy once, he remembered what went through his mind whenever he looked at her.

It hadn't been how he wanted this next interaction with her to go. He had actually been planning on asking her to come around to the Manor for dinner one night so he could introduce her to Narcissa. He hadn't quite worked out how to phrase that question yet, but he wanted Narcissa to meet the girl.

He didn't think he would get the opportunity to ask later that evening. The girl was angry with him.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27

Hermione was ecstatic when she found out about her new job. It was at the Records department at the Ministry. Not perhaps the most exciting department, but it was a start and from there, after she'd proved herself, then she could move onto something with a bit more substance. No one could handle filing for any stretch of time surely, or that was what she thought until she met Miss Clarabel McNuffy. Miss Clarabel was the department supervisor and must have been in her late 80s. She had worked there since graduation and even identified herself as a spinster.

Although Miss Clarabel was lovely and a bit of a push over as a supervisor, Hermione did kind of see her as an example of how things could go really wrong.

The dark dungeon she worked in wasn't all bad as she had Rachel with her, an American exchange worker, who was slightly older than Hermione and in love with England. And not just the wizard England.

It was actually refreshing to be with someone who saw the wonder of wizarding Britain. Hermione had gotten so used to it, she had become immune to its charm. Rachel loved Diagon Alley and dragged Hermione with her every lunch hour.

"I love the old buildings," Rachel would say. "We have wizarding corners here and there, but it not like this."

Hermione had never really thought much about Wizarding America, there was surprisingly little contact between the two as far as Hermione knew.

"Everything is so quaint," Rachel said. "At home, things are much more subdued. You know, since we are much less segregated."

"You're less segregated?" Hermione asked, her interest piqued.

"Yes, magic is more open," Rachel said. "Non magicals think we're looneys, but its fairly open."

"You do magic in front of muggles?" Hermione asked.

"What a funny term," Rachel said. "But yes, sometimes, not ostentatiously, but some offer magic services to the public."

Hermione served as Rachel's guide every day and asked constant questions about the magical community in America. They were really different. And Hermione was most impressed one day when Rachel wore jeans to work. Miss Clarabel was less than impressed.

Rachel was only going to be there for two months. Rachel was from New York, and had come on a working holiday before she was going to tour some of the European hotspots.

“Why are you stuck in this job anyway, it is indescribably boring.” Rachel asked. “You’re smart enough to do any job.”

“I’m muggleborn.” Hermione said. “My parents are non magicals.” Hermione had started to get used to Rachel’s terms.

“You mean there is discrimination against you because your parents are non magicals.” Rachel said shocked. “That’s barbaric.”

Hermione could only agree. Hermione found that there were some parts of the UK Wizarding world’s more barbaric aspects that she wanted to keep from Rachel. It would probably detract from some of the charm that Rachel loved so much. Rachel was in love with Hogwarts. She had gone on a tour when the students were there. Rachel asked incessantly about what life was like as a student. Rachel had gone to a nice muggle private school in New York. Magic was apparently taught one on one within families or mentors. God parents played an important role in magic education.

Apparently magical people lived within the muggle community in America.

Rachel asked Hermione if she was seeing anyone special and Hermione was a bit vague on that particular topic. She got the feeling that Rachel would not approve of her illicit affair with a married man. Let alone an ex-Death Eater, who in accordance to the US magical communities were escaped mental patients, who were victims to too much dark magic use, and an example of the hazards of dark magic.

She still saw Lucius every night. Just about. She just melted whenever he looked at her and she felt utterly compelled to go to him. She was contemplating the idea that she might be addicted to him. She had read about sex addiction, and she was wondering if she was suffering from it.

He wanted her to move into the cottage now that she had a job, but she refused. She just knew that she would lose what independence she had if she moved into his cottage. It would be another step to dependence on him. To become another one of his possessions. No she stayed at the Borrow even though she would love a space of her own.

She knew he wanted more. He didn’t hide it. Sometimes he wanted her to stay the night. Hermione couldn’t deny that it was tempting to have his warm body next to her throughout the night. But it was a temptation of a relationship that wasn’t supposed to be. In hindsight, she knew that if she known then what she’d knew now, she would have stayed as far away from young Lucius as Hogwarts as she possibly could have.

But thinking of him still brought butterflies to her stomach, whether she liked it or not.

“Look.” Rachel said. ‘If you are suffering from discrimination here, you should come to the US. You wouldn’t be, with us, magic is magic, and its all to be celebrated. My dad works at the Association,’ which Hermione had learned was a quasy equivalent of the Ministry that dealt with magical affairs, “he is always looking for bright people. I can have a talk to him for you if you want.”

The offer was unexpected and out of reflect she politely decline. Moving to America wasn’t even in the realm of possibility, wasn’t it?

Although the more she thought about it, the more the idea grew that maybe she actually had a chance to get over her thing for Lucius if she actually got away from him. She had to admit that the sleeping with him every night strategy to get over him wasn't exactly working. She told herself she had to decide what she wanted, a future with him or a future without him. A future with him would pretty much involve the status quo forever.

Being with him would make the other things she wanted in life significant harder, probably impossible. She had been banking on one or both of them tiring, but it hadn't happened so far. What if it never did? What if this addition, this love, for want of a better word, would just go on and on.

She just wanted some peace. She had lived as this big ball of painful uncertainty for a while now and she was worn out. Maybe going away was the best thing to do and magical New York sounded like a nice place. Much more reasonable on their views of muggle magical relations, no real blood status issues, and potentially a meaningful job.

She came to the realisations that the pro were heavily in favour of going and there was only one con; Lucius.

Life was good as far as Lucius was concerned. The girl wouldn't move in, but she would soon see the practicality of it. He could see uncertainty in her face. He didn't do anything to alleviate any fears she had. It wasn't necessarily a bad thing to have people around you a little off kilter. If you kept them in need, they wouldn't seek out new needs.

He loved the point where she gave in, abandoned everything for her desire for him. It filled something in him, knowing she wanted him so much.

But saying that, there was also something nice about talking to her. She did relax a little when they talked, she could be quite humorous. She could also tease a little when she was in the mood. He liked the relaxed Hermione, but he had trouble letting go of the power and control that allowed her to relax. He knew that he was the key to her moods, but letting her relax was outside his comfort zone.

It was a balance he was determined to explore. He kind of wanted it both ways, he knew. He would work out a balance that worked well for them both. He genuinely didn't want her to be unhappy.

That was until the night she said she was leaving for a while. An indeterminate amount of time, to the colonies of all places. She was saying something about healing space. His underlying instinct was to murder her.

He didn't. Murder wasn't his thing, but his instinct with her was to. She was leaving him. Taking all this happiness with her. Depriving him. Injuring him.

It was not acceptable that anyone do this to him. Least of all some little mudblood chit.

She kissed him and he wanted to wind his fingers around her neck. Stop her. But he didn't. Years and years of training forced him to remain calm and collected, no matter the adversity. His training forced him to remain calm, think, seek the optimal solution.

"Don't go." Was all he could manage.

"I have to." She said, she was crying. "I can't do this. I love you, but this isn't healthy."

He didn't know what she was referring to.

"If you loved me, you wouldn't hurt me." He said.

"If you loved me, you wouldn't ask." She said and apparated away.

Again, he didn't know what she was referring to. She was gone. He screamed in vexation. How dare she leave him. This was unacceptable. She had done this to him, then she just left.

After a few moments of destruction, he calmed down. She couldn't have hurt him more if she tried, he realised. He wondered if that was her purpose. He hadn't thought her capable, but now he wasn't so sure. As a campaign, it had been flawless.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28

Hermione's new job with the Association was exciting, challenging, but definitely not boring. They had set her up in a tiny apartment in New York, which was good because her salary wasn't much to brag about. But she got by.

The Association, which managed all magical affairs in the USA and Canada, didn't have the resources or the regulatory structures that the Ministry did. It was an association and people joined it through membership, which meant that if anyone disagreed with its mandate or what it was doing, they would refuse to be part of it.

Hermione was amazed by the diversity. The wizarding communities were regional and fairly geographically spread out, so there wasn't the cohesion that existed in the UK. There wasn't one magical world on the continent, there were several and many of them didn't have anything to do with other communities. There was the Native American groups, which had a fairly heavy magical genetic heritage, which would listen to the Association, but do whatever they wanted.

The voodoo crowd in the deep south was suspicious of everything the Association did and wouldn't even show up at any scheduled meetings.

However, the vast bulk of the populace were immigrants who had fled the more restrictive regimes in Europe, including the Ministry. Overall, they liked being less regulated.

The Association managed transportation and enforcement. There was a policy team, where Hermione worked, but where possible the members would generally vote to not have one if they could get away with it. The Association depended on an old set of witchcraft laws that had been established a long time ago to forbid witchcraft. They had been adjusted and amended over the years to manage a magical community, but they were still part of the muggle legal system. Hence part of the laws of the land, which no one could challenge.

Hermione felt like she hadn't had a second's rest since she got there, not that she minded. Her work was challenging and it wasn't hard to see how someone less keen on putting in some real elbow grease would hate working for the Association. Her boss, Rachel's father was smart and reasonable; a keen student of philosophy and debating, which made it really hard to win an argument with him. It served him really well when dealing with the less accommodating members of the community.

New York was amazing, the speed of everything, including the Association. There was no taking two years to deliberate a clause amendment to a bylaw, decisions were required immediately.

Hermione thrived professionally and personally. Each new season would bring on a range of new things to do, and the country was so broad, there was always something new to explore.

She had even gone on a few dates, but nothing serious. In terms of the romantic department, she was still in a bit of a mess. She ached for him in the beginning, so badly she didn't know what to do with herself. But it was retreating somewhat. Now, she still ached for him at the end of the rough day, she wished she could just cuddle up to him for comfort. Not that cuddling or comfort had ever been part of his repertoire.

She even missed some of his acerbic opinions and thoughts. There wasn't enough acerbicism in the American culture. Not one of the things she'd expected to miss, but she did.

But this was for her good, she reminded herself and she didn't have any problems believing it. If only he'd been different, things could have been different. But on the other hand, maybe it was some of his complete impossibility that she loved. It took a lot of time exploring her own head to lead to that train of thought. Maybe she was drawn to him because she couldn't have him. Maybe that's what drew her in the beginning.

A bit of maturity would take care of such destructive fascinations.

It had almost been a year since she'd left the UK. She was finally starting to feel at home in the US. At first, she felt like an overwhelmed tourist, but over time she settled down. And she really liked her life.

"I hope you won't hate me, but I have volunteered your help to Steve." Rachel's father, Mitch said one day.

"Oh." Hermione said. In truth she wasn't all that thrilled about being volunteered without her knowledge.

"He is struggling at the moment." Mitch continued. "There is an immigration influx and he is swamped."

"Influx?" Hermione asked.

"It happens occasionally when things change in Europe. People seek to come here. We help them with immigration. Filling in the forms, setting up interviews. They don't need us, but some of the Europeans don't seem to be able to tie their shoelaces without some authority telling them how to. Anyway, I promised Steve that you might help. I hope you don't mind. Many from the UK, so it might be comforting to deal with someone familiar. Some of them are a bit distressed."

"What do you mean distressed?" Hermione said.

"Since this country started, people come here to escape persecution."

"Persecution?" Hermione said. "What persecution?" Although she had a feeling she didn't want to know. In truth, she had slipped away from the UK pretty much without incident. Ron and Ginny were sorry to see her go, but they got over it pretty quick. After some exchanged owls, communications dripped to a stop. Cross Atlantic mail service was quite expensive and once the telling of her new situation, there wasn't that much to say.

There might have been the little thing about them finding out that she had been seeing Lucius Malfoy too. It did seem to represent a bit of a wedge in their relationship. Hermione had tried to explain herself and the reasons for leaving the UK. Ginny made some half hearted

effort to say she understood, but the undercurrent was that she clearly didn't. Hermione couldn't blame them, she couldn't justify her behaviour to herself let alone anyone else.

She didn't know how they found out, she didn't care. Secrets came out that is just the way it was and just desserts for having secrets.

Anyway, Hermione trailed along to Steve's department and was briefed on how to help immigrants get through the US Department of Immigration, although there was a strong preference for the Canadian equivalent as they were easier to deal with. The US version seemed to feel that if you made the process hard, you would discourage people from trying. But little did the US Department of Immigration know that they were dealing with people who were used to dealing with European Ministries of Magic. In terms of bureaucracy, they were novices compared to the hardened masters.

Hermione met her first family, the Hartleners from Wales. There were huddled together on one sofa wearing full wizarding robes. Hermione hadn't seen full wizarding robes in a while. Attire at the Ministry was more The Gap, then wizarding fashion.

The family, as was a typical couldn't understand why they had to fill out muggle forms. Hermione also had to take them to a muggle hospital for a medical check with a friendly doctor who was married to a witch.

Hermione could see the family's discomfort as they were obviously not used to having to deal with muggle transportation. The floo network was not well developed in North America. It existed in some of the older buildings, but it was intermittent and pretty unreliable. It was an eye opener to discover the effort needed to keep the floo network operational. The Association coffers didn't allow for any extensions, so floo connections were previous like hens teeth.

Apparently, things were getting bad back in the UK for the Hartleners. He was a half blood and she was a second generation muggleborn who was uneducated. Apparently being uneducated was a bit of a problem.

Hermione hadn't known it was a problem, but could perhaps see how some of the Ministry cronies could think so. She could well imagine Umbridge thinking so.

"Well it's not a problem here." She reassured them.

"We didn't want to come," Mrs. Hartlener said, "but they were going to take Gruverer wand."

"That's awful." Hermione said with concern.

"Its all that Malfoy character's fault." Mr. Hartlener said.

Hermione felt goosebumps spread all over her body and her heartbeat sped up.

"Lucius Malfoy?" Hermione asked.

"Ever since he became Protector In Situ, things have gone from bad to worse." He said.

"Not quite." The woman said. "Not as bad as it was a few years ago, but it seemed to be happening again."

“What is happening again?” Hermione said, she was almost shaking.

“The persecution.” She said. “They put me on trial before, tried to take my wand, but I didn’t have one, so they put me in Azkaban until Gruverer managed to convince them that his mother’s wand was mine.”

“That’s awful.” Hermione said. “That was before, what do you mean its happening again?”

“The restrictions.” He said. “The Ministry is exercising its control over absolutely everything. We tried to enrol Mogens in Hogwarts and had to prove her wizard heritage back three generations. Their new policy is that there must be a pureblood at least three generations back, otherwise they can’t enrol. Luckily for use, I do, but it still sits bad. They restrict everything, what job you can have, who can marry. It was time to go. I was going to lose my job, so we decided it was time. I have an uncle that came here in the sixties, and he seemed to like it.”

Mrs. Hartleener didn’t look convinced as Hermione looked from one to the other. Hermione hadn’t heard anything about such changes back in the UK. And apparently, it seemed Lucius had something to do with it. He had tried to get muggleborns out of Hogwarts before, she had bargained with him to get him to back down. It seemed he had gone ahead and done it. She didn’t think he would, seriously would go ahead, but now it seemed he had.

Hermione had to excuse herself so she could go sit down. She had been so preoccupied with her new life, she hadn’t even considered what was going on back home. What have you done, Lucius?

She ended up questioning Steve who confirmed that from what he heard things were indeed changing back in the UK and there had been an increasing flood of refugees seeking a new life in the US or Canada, muggleborns and half bloods mostly. It seemed to happen every twenty years or so in his estimation.

It seemed the situation was, according to Steve, that Lucius has installed himself in a new position called Protector In Situ, which the mandate to protect society from unwanted challenges. There was still a Minister of Magic, but this Protector position seemed to make whatever changes it saw fit. It was nowhere as bad as it was before when that mad man was trying to take over, much more political in nature.

This news was destroying the peace she had felt here and she was angry. Even here, their pureblood crap was encroaching on her life. She had been living with it since she was eleven and now that she was finally away from it, it still affected her.

It wasn’t her fault, she raged, she was an incomer, it wasn’t her society. They decided their rules and they kept on letting this happened. Well, they could just stew in their own incompetence. She done enough saving them, Harry had given his life to save them and they just slipped back into the shit.

Hermione was determined to not care. Although it prayed on her mind that Lucius seemed to be the instigator for these changes. Someone she’d had a relationship with was the person responsible. Then one night when she was lying in bed in her small apartment, a really disturbing thought occurred to her. Maybe it had been him all along, maybe it had been his policies and intentions under Voldmort. Voldemort was the violence and Lucius was the intent. She dismissed the thought, but it niggled in the back of her brain.

Hermione had to deal with two families a week from the UK, hearing stories about how all non purebloods had been removed from all positions of office in the Ministry. Muggleborns had pretty much been expelled in all capacities.

Hermione fumed at Lucius' hypocrisy. There was this underlying hope that he wasn't responsible, but she knew it in her heart that he was. There had been a few times she questioned his mental stability and she couldn't help but question it now.

He hadn't been like this with her, he had been much more accepting and accommodating. He had let muggleborns stay at Hogwarts and even that weird night when he was telling her about the wizard society's long standing obsession with the muggle world, it its twisted iterations. But she couldn't deny that he had wanted to push muggleborns out. She had thought it was an excuse to bargain with her. Maybe he was punishing her, she thought, but dismissed it as seriously overestimating her importance in the world.

Hermione managed to get on with it, after Harry's death, she was a lot less sympathetic to the wizarding world's tribulations.

Then came a letter from Molly. A desperate letter written in a hurry.

Dear Hermione,

Please help me, Hermione. They have taken my Arthur. I know he listens to you, please make him give me back my Arthur. I wouldn't ask if I had any other recourse. Arthur will never survive Azkaban, he is such a gentle soul. Please help. I don't know what to do.

Love Always,

Molly

The letter was like a punch to the gut. She knew that Lucius intensely disliked Arthur Weasley, he always had, but she never really understood why. There was always something about blood traitors, but she had never seen Lucius treat anyone else with as much vitriol as he did Arthur Weasley.

This wasn't fair, Hermione cried as she scrunched the letter in her hand. Why did she always have to sort out their issues? She hadn't been at the final battle, but if she had, she'd probably be just as dead as Harry was. Harry didn't deserve to die for them.

But Hermione would never be able to deny Molly help. If it had been anyone else, she might be tempted to ignore it, but she could never stand by and let Molly suffer. Molly and Arthur were her adopted wizard family after all. She had no idea what this would entail, but she would never be able to say no.

She didn't have any illusions as she booked a portkey back to the UK that this would be a simple easy thing, or that would even end well, but what could she do? Whatever influence she had with Lucius Malfoy, she would have to yield.

Hermione arrived to a cold drizzling London. Diagon Alley wasn't deserted to Hermione's eternal relief but there was a grimness on some people's expressions. She tucked her jacket tight around her as she walked to the apparition point.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29

Molly was a nervous wreck when Hermione got to the Burrow, but it was clear that she believed salvation had arrived when Hermione walked through the door.

“Oh thank Merlin you’re here.” Molly said with visible relief.

“Where is everyone?” Hermione asked as the house was completely quiet.

“I sent Ron and Ginny to Romania to stay with Charlie. Bill is in France, Percy’s at work and so are the twins. And Arthur...” Molly choked and teared up.

“It will be fine.” Hermione said trying to comfort the distressed woman. “I am sure its all a misunderstanding.”

“He has always had it in for my Arthur.” Molly said, obviously referring to Lucius.

“What did they take him for?” Hermione asked. “Was he charged with anything?”

“I don’t think they bother with such details.” Molly said with venom. “They just take anyone they don’t like.”

“I’m sure they won’t hurt him.” Hermione said. She wasn’t entirely sure, but she was pretty sure.

“You have to talk to him.” Molly said. “He will listen to you.”

“I’m not sure, Molly.” She said. “I broke it off with him, I might not be his favourite person.”

A sob escaped from Molly’s throat.

“But I will give it my best shot.” Hermione said and if all goes ridiculously well, I won’t be carted off myself. Although she wasn’t entirely sure of Lucius’ mental state, she was pretty sure he wouldn’t hurt her, pretty sure, maybe. “I will try to speak to him tomorrow.”

“Are you hungry?” Molly said, back on familiar ground. “You seem skinny. Don’t they feed you over there?”

Hermione suffered through a whole night of motherly fussing, which was quite nice on some level. It was better once George and Fred came home. Percy lived in his own place now with his wife. Molly incessantly harped on them about shutting up shop and going to Romania. The boys refused, they felt their joke shop was needed more than ever. Molly just kept wringing her hands. It broke Hermione’s heart to see her so distressed.

The next day, she set off to find Lucius Malfoy soon after breakfast. She really didn’t want to, believed that this might be an unpleasant undertaking. Of maybe she would lose all semblance of sanity and fall into his arms. She had a documented weakness for him after all. Both outcomes would be bad.

Since he was ‘an employee’ of the Ministry, she guessed he would be found there. Things seemed pretty normal as she walked down the street, people were going about their business. It was encouraging, she told herself. It can’t be that bad, whatever he is doing. She assured herself that it was all exaggeration. He was just the person they blamed.

She asked at reception if she could see Lucius Malfoy and the woman gave her an incredulous look.

“Do you have an appointment?” The snarky woman asked.

“No.”

“Then no, you can’t.” She said. “Try making an appointment, it is the customary fashion.”

“Fine,” Hermione said, “could you make an appointment for me.”

“You will have to see his secretary on the fifth floor. Goodbye.” The woman said and dismissed her.

“A name would be helpful.” But the woman had moved onto the next person in line.

Hermione supposed she would have to ask someone if they knew where Lucius Malfoy’s secretary was. She walked towards the elevator and waited. She felt a jerk on her arm and looked around to see some strange man, no two strange men.

“Would you come with us, Miss Granger.” One of them said and dragged her along. She obviously wasn’t getting much choice. Oh just great, she was being taken she assumed. This is probably how they did it and now it was happening to her. She was a tiny bit scared.

A little less civilised than making an appointment, but it served the same purpose.

She got deposited in a small room without any windows. It was obviously an interrogation room of some kind. She waited there for what seemed like hours before the door opened and Draco stepped in.

“Granger.” He said.

“Malfoy?” She said back, he was not the person she had expected to see. “What are you doing here?”

“I work here.” He said. “I am head of Security. More pertinent, what are you doing here?”

“Pertinent? Big word for you isn’t it, Malfoy.” She said with spite. “So this is what you do, abduct people and cart them off to interrogation.”

“In a nut shell.” He said. “I ensure there are no undesirables with intentions that are counterproductive.”

“Counterproductive?” She said. “You mean like having an opinion or an objection to being treated like a criminal when one has done nothing wrong. Or is being disliked by you counterproductive these days?”

Draco gave her a bored look.

“I guess the Inquisitorial Squad really was your calling in life, seeming as you have gone on to do it professionally. How quaint.”

"I have to protect the interests of our society."

"And that is done by getting rid of everyone who doesn't see things the way you do? I understand that you want to exclude people like me, you have been talking about it for as long as I know you, but why people like Arthur Weasley. This society is all he knows, he doesn't have anywhere else to go. Or does your protection only extend to people you like, everyone else be damned, is that it?"

"I have to protect my father." He said.

"From Arthur Weasley?"

"From anyone who wants to hurt him." He said and Hermione gave him an incredulous look. "Why are you here?"

"I am here to get you to release Arthur Weasley." She said. "You have no right to hold him. Have you charged him with anything? I seriously doubt you have a true case, probably not like it matters to you."

"Is that all?" Draco said.

"Yes." Hermione said.

"Fine." He said. "Provided that you crawl back under whatever rock you have been hiding under."

"Is that it?" Hermione asked, not believing that he would give her what she was after so easily.

"Provided you go back to America and stay there, I will release Arthur Weasley." Draco said. Well, he knew where she had been which was interesting, maybe disturbing. He looked tired. "Do we have a deal?"

"What's the catch, Malfoy?" She said. "You are never reasonable."

"Maybe I have grown up a bit." He said with a tinge of bitterness. "No catch, I'll release him now and you go back to America. He doesn't know you're here, we keep it that way. You slink off and everyone is happy."

"You don't want him to know I am here." Hermione said more to herself than to him.

"Like I said, I have to protect my father." He stood up from the desk he was leaning on and walked towards the door. "Do we have a deal?"

"Yes." Hermione said.

Draco walked her to a floo point.

"Good riddance, Granger." He said as she threw the powder down.

Draco was good to his word, Arthur was back home within the hour. Molly was beside herself and she was packing their things. Time for an extended holiday, she'd announced. George and Fred again refused to go, but worked hard to ensure that Molly and Arthur went.

Hermione sat outside of the house as the commotion went on inside. Molly had to have the big clock with her and wouldn't compromise for the world. Hermione felt like she had gotten

a 'get out of jail free' card. That had been incredibly easy. Mission completed and she would be back in the US by tomorrow.

Hermione owed a note to the transatlantic portkey department and booked a spot for the next day. Molly and Arthur left earlier in the morning, so Hermione would be alone for a few hours. Hermione decided to go visit her parents, it had been a while since they'd been over to see her, so it would be nice to spend lunch with them.

Hermione turned up at the Transatlantic Porting Department ten minutes ahead of schedule as was recommended and waited on some benches with the other travellers.

An employee came along and collected their papers, which were required for intercontinental travel. And a good thing too, otherwise unknown wizards could travel into the country and cause all sorts of havoc that she would have to clean up. The fact that it was known they were in the country tended to make them behave better. Apparently this was learned at a time when Voldemort's original crew was trying to recruit in the Americas back in the sixties. Before Lucius was born.

It was a bit of an anticlimax not seeing him. It was for the best, she knew. It was interesting that Draco went out of his way to make sure Lucius never saw her. She wondered what Draco feared would happen. Although if Draco was apprehensive, she had no problem heeding the advice.

Part of her was aching to see him though. It was just a shame that the one she had fallen in love with was a bit of a nutter. A dangerous, controlling nutter with designs on the world. She wasn't sure how troubled he was. Maybe he was sane but just with really bad intentions. She just couldn't bring herself to think of him as evil. Someone evil would never make her feel so good, so alive.

But on the other hand, she had managed to fool herself into thinking that he was just caught by circumstances, forced to deal with situations that was far from ideal. Now, however, he had gone about and created the circumstances, it was impossible to uphold the idea that he was a lovely man underneath it all, stuck in a bad situation.

She had always suspected, that is why she left. There was something about him that was very scary. He could be completely charming and downright alluring, impossibly alluring, but then he was so capable of wreaking havoc. Smart, calculating, insanely ambitious, and potentially without any conscience whatsoever. If there ever was a type that her mother would tell her to stay away from, he was probably the perfect fit.

But there was still the youthful him, so perfect, so full of promise. There was still that niggling part of her that wanted to bring back the joy he was capable of, to see him happy. She loved that look on him when he was happy and content. The look he had in Austria. When he was pleased with her. She could kind of understand Draco's constant striving to please him, it was utterly addictive.

"Could you come with us, Miss Granger." A man said, disturbing her troubled musings.

Oh not again, she said in her head. She suspected that Draco wanted to give her another threatening pep talk. Well she hoped that was what was going on.

"The portkey is leaving soon, I don't have any time."

“Don’t you worry about that.” The man said with a smile. A kind of slimy smile. They were different men from the hence men Draco used. She felt a fissure of concern as they gently coaxed her into a room.

“This way, Miss.” One of them said.

“I really have to get back.” Hermione said. “I have a very important meeting to get too.”

“I am sure this won’t take long.” One of the men said with a reassuring smile.

They got into another room and a large man put manacles on her wrists. Hermione gasped. She was being taken, she was really being taken this time.

“Its just procedure.” The slimy man said.

“Procedure for what?” She demanded.

The large man tugged her along and apparated them somewhere dark, damp and built of stone.

“Welcome to Azkaban.” The man said in a rough voice that sounded like gravel rubbing together, like he was made of the stone they were surrounded by. “I am sure your stay will be pleasant.”

Hermione was shoved into another little interrogation room, much dirtier than the last. Draco like cleanliness, she realised. Maybe Draco had changed his mind, she thought. But she knew it wasn’t true, this was Lucius. He’d found out she was there and it seemed he had a bone to pick.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30

Lucius was sitting at his desk, going over some report when an aide told him that they had one of the listed undesirables in custody. That was nothing new, but the aide got his complete attention when he said it was Hermione Granger.

In fact, Lucius had to stop what he was doing to absorb what he'd just heard. He had her, here, now. His suspicious mind immediately jumped to the question, why? Why was she here? What did she want?

Lucius felt a flush of excitement, but wouldn't allow a miniscule bit of it to show. He felt drunk with pleasure, victory. He had her.

"Where is she?" He said in complete practiced calm, which meant to most people his heightened state was imperceptible.

"In Azkaban." The aide said.

Azkaban was a little extreme, he recognised. She would not like that and it hadn't been his intention, but in hindsight, it was procedure for anyone on the wider wanted list to be taken directly to Azkaban. It would have been difficult to organise an exception.

On second thought, it would probably to her good to stew for a while. Let her realise who she was messing with.

He didn't really know what to do now, he had planned this out in minute detail a hundred times over, but he had never settled on a favourite scenario. He had put her on the wider wanted list which meant that she would be detained at any time she engaged with any official function. After that it was just a matter of waiting until there was a bite somewhere.

It seemed she had been detained trying to get a portkey to America. He had suspected that she was in another country, but he had expressly not sought her location out. She didn't deserve the attention.

But he had to know what campaign she had been running against him. It was completely unsuccessful, he was stronger than ever, but he would not take the attempt lying down. There had been enough lying down in this whole enterprise. It disgusted him to think about it.

No, she would fear him now. He had the whole world at his feet, and she would know that she was a very small, insignificant speck in that world. One he would personally expel.

He poured himself a drink and savoured the anticipation.

Hermione had no idea what time it was or how long she'd been there. She'd paced around the tiny room for a while, then eventually fell asleep. She woke up starving, not knowing if it was day or night in the tiny windowless room.

She had gone through periods where she wanted to rip Lucius a new one, to periods where she wanted to plead with him. There was even the odd thought of some kind of bargaining, but she dismissed those as soon as they came up. It was just not appropriate to have fantasies about a man who was holding you prisoner.

She went back to sleep, and yet no one came. A tray of food appeared on the table and it startled her as it arrived. The food was atrocious and she had trouble getting it down, even though she was very hungry at this point.

She thought about getting a message to Draco. Draco could get her out and probably wanted to, but she wasn't sure he would ever act against his father. The only other people who would potentially help her were George and Fred, but that would only get them in trouble, which meant the sobbing and distressed Molly again.

Surely Lucius couldn't hold her prisoner for any length of time, although he had done it to Arthur. He had to be reasonable, she was only the ex-...thing. She certainly wouldn't call herself a mistress, but girlfriend wasn't appropriate either.

Eventually the door opened and he stepped inside. He seemed to take up much of the room and Hermione felt his presence as an oppressive force in the room. His face was neutral, set in the haughty look that he did so well.

"Miss Granger." He said as sat down on the chair on the other side of the table. He slowly pulled his gloves off and placed them gently on the table just to the right of him.

"Lucius." She said.

It was silent for a while.

"What's going on Lucius?" She said. "Why are you holding me here? Why are you doing this, all of it?"

"All of what?"

"All these changes that you are forcing on people." She said. "Pushing people out, locking up people."

"For the good of this society." He said matter of factly.

"How exactly is holding me here good for this society?" She said.

"You have been deemed as undesirable."

"By you."

"Yes."

"You can't lock up your old... interests because things have fallen apart."

"You are not here because of any interest I have shown in you." He said with an edge of disgust.

"Then why am I here?"

"You are charged with attempt to pervert the natural course. And for your actions, you have been deemed to be undesirable."

“Pervert the natural course?” She said. “What exactly does that refer to?”

“Going back in time to influence the natural course of events.”

“We both know that going back in time cannot actually change anything subsequently. Time, history is set.”

“But it did.” He said. “You influenced the natural course after your return, you brought about things that were not supposed to be.”

Hermione made a bitter little laugh, “So you are charging me for your interest, but not for rejecting it.”

The word rejection brought a microseconds worth of reaction in his face, but it was gone as soon as it appeared.

“An unnatural interest.” He said. Hermione watched him for a while, he met her look straight on refusing to react to her gaze. His expression was so cold, it was almost inconceivable that she had ever been intimate with him, kissed him. He was much more like the man she’d met before her accidental detour back in time.

He was watching her, watching for reaction, watching for weakness. She knew any weakness would please him. She contemplated going all out for the begging thing. He would get his fill and leave, maybe release her. But it really went against the grain, and it might not get her released at all, just left here to rot. Well, if she was going to rot, she wasn’t going to give him any pleasure in it.

“And of course, you take no responsibility. How long are you going to hold me?” She said. “When will I have access to my solicitor?”

“Solicitor?” He said coldly.

“It is due process, or have you deemed that undesirable as well.” She was getting a bit snarky, and it wasn’t sitting well with him.

“You will have to deal with whatever comes your way, Miss Granger.” With that he stood and after a moment of looking down his nose at her, he left.

Hermione felt completely deflated after he’d gone. She wasn’t sure if it was the bitterness in him or the adrenalin of seeing him. He was so angry. She hadn’t been expecting a light and cheery reunion, but neither had she expected the categorisation of their whole relationship as unnatural.

And he wasn’t planning on letting her go, or at least he wouldn’t let on when he was letting her go. She hoped that he, they had to conform with due process, but then Arthur had been kept without trial or even reason.

A man came shortly after and led her to a cell. In was barren, tiny, but it had a little window which was the only saving grace to Hermione’s existence at the moment. She felt defeated and needed to cry.

She wasn’t a big crier, but being thrown in Azkaban did deserve a bit of a cry. She wondered if he did, he had been thrown in here twice and he must have been aware that there was a good chance that he would be there for a very long time. It must be an awful feeling, it

was pretty awful even knowing that you hadn't done anything wrong. She was fairly certain that this wrong would be corrected, maybe she just wasn't jaded enough to believe that anyone innocent could be locked away and then forgotten. Although Sirius had been, for twelve years.

The thought made her cry even more. Maybe he wanted to scare her, she just wasn't sure how cruel Lucius could be. There was just such a distance between the man she saw today and the man she had been intimate with.

Eventually the tears dried up and she just sat there staring at the bit of the moon she could see out the tiny window. She wondered if she really would change things if she could. If she could prevent herself from going back in time, would she? Would she forego the love she had developed for him, and then rejected, for a life where she had never tangled with him.

But even if she found a time turner, they weren't exact enough so she could pinpoint the day when she broke the first time turner and accidentally sent herself back in time. Who knew where she'd end up.

Irrespective, she wasn't sure she'd do it. Even though he was a total arsehole, there was something quite precious about the love she had for him. It was her first real love after all. It was just unfortunate that it had been with a heartless bastard.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31

Lucius entered the little cell she occupied. It really was tiny and she looked uncomfortable. Good, he thought.

He pulled out his wand and enlarged the table, drew two chairs on each side.

“Sit.” He ordered, pointing at the chair.

She gave him a less than impressed look, but after a little while complied. She sat with her arms crossed. Such defiance, he thought.

He placed a vial of veritaserum on the table. “Drink it.” He ordered.

She gave him a look like he was out of his mind. “Drink it or I’ll make you.”

Yes, yes, if looks could kill, I’d be dead, he thought with a wry smile. She considered it for a moment, then complied. She wasn’t stupid, he knew that, and she knew that he really could make her. And he could make it a very unpleasant experience as well.

“Now.” He said with a sense of rightness that everything was going as planned. “Now that we are being honest, lets have a little chat. Why did Dumbledore send you back in time?”

She didn’t answer at first. “He didn’t.”

“As far as you know, he didn’t.” Lucius corrected.

“He wouldn’t do that.” Hermione said.

“Wouldn’t he?” Lucius said. “According to your childish mind, he would never do such a thing?”

“Are you calling me childish?”

“You were a child at the time.”

“I wasn’t much older when I came back.”

This gave him pause, it was an accusation and he knew there was some merit to it.

“You were practically a year older.”

“Is that the difference between child and adult then. The demarcation point.”

“Well you were certainly engaging in some adult activities.” He said.

“I guess that depends on your perspective.”

“What was your intent in seducing me?” He said bringing the conversation back to where it was supposed to be. “How did you intend on influencing me?”

Her expression seemed to soften a bit. "It was never my intention, it just happened. And it certainly wasn't to have some kind of influence over you."

"I don't believe you." He said.

"You fed me the veritas serum." She said. "You can't ignore that just because you're not hearing what you want to hear."

"You knew who I was, what was your intention in seducing me?"

"I didn't seduce you." Hermione said. "If anything it was the other way around."

He slowly raised an eyebrow. "I hardly think so. Did you intend to influence my thoughts on your kind? Tempt me into changing my beliefs by distracting me through the allure of your body."

"I'm sorry, I was too busy fighting the 'allure' to think about any of the repercussions." She said, she seemed to be weakening in her emotions. "I didn't think you'd remember. You were so different, it fascinated me and I don't think it would do any harm."

"Well," He said coldly, "given your current circumstances, I guess you were wrong."

"I knew that when I came back." She said. "I tried to not engage with you, but you wouldn't let me."

"Well you don't get to walk away, Miss Granger." He said, he wasn't really intending to say that but it came out.

"So that's what this all is about." She said. "You were offended that I walked away. That kind of goes against what you were saying yesterday, when you were adamant that me being here was not at all related to the fact that our relationship ended."

"The crime was in your intention, Miss Granger, not the fact that it achieved you nothing. At which point you realised you were wasting your time. And it was a dalliance, not a relationship." He said sharply.

"Whatever." She said getting angry now. "You can call it whatever you like, but be aware that it was all driven by you."

"Liar!" He snapped.

"You can tell yourself whatever you want, but the truth of the matter, the truth about this," she said motioning around her, "is that you can't get over the fact that you fell for a mudblood."

Anger boiled in his veins.

"It doesn't matter how you twist it Lucius, even if I went all out to seduce you with the most cruel of intentions, you still fell for it and you are just going to have to deal with that." She yelled. "Keeping me here doesn't negate that little issue."

Lucius was out the door and down the hall. Bitch! He wanted to kill her, wring her little neck and squeeze the insolence out of her. He apparated away as soon as he could, he needed a drink rather desperately. If he was honest with himself, which luckily he could take or leave,

he would have to concede that she had beaten him. Well, that was just round one, a lucky shot. It is the war that matters.

Will this girl vex him eternally, he wondered when he was a drink in his hand back in his office. The whole purpose of this endeavour was to prevent that. Yet, she managed to goad him. It was embarrassing losing his temper. He would just have to try harder. He decided that now might be a good time to fire some of the less competent Ministry employees.

He usually enjoyed such dispatching, he despised incompetence, but thoughts of the girl kept on returning. Her accusations were completely unfounded of course. He is extremely magnanimous when people leave, he was when Narcissa asked him for a divorce, which had occurred shortly after the girl had left. He had provided her with a generous settlement even though she had not asked for one. He was very reasonable to the women around him, so her accusations were completely baseless.

The girl had worn the same clothes as the day before. She had no other clothes and they would soon dirty and wear. He knew what life was like in Azkaban. His time was worse, much worse as he had forbidden any of the dementors to go near her. He wasn't sure why, but he didn't want her to be subjected to their influence.

The interrogation didn't go as he wished. He wasn't sure what he wanted to outcome to be. He'd had visions of her crying, begging, falling at his feet. There had been some in his mind's eye that were involved her begging, but not for her release. Well, from prison, to be exact. He tried to dismiss those thoughts, it was significantly harder when he got drunk later in the evenings.

The next day, he placed the vial of veritaserum on the table in her cell exactly like the day before. She moved from the bed to the chair and drunk the vial.

"What do you wish to talk about today then, Lucius?" She asked.

"I wish to talk about why you came back." He said. Their conversation so far today had almost been cordial.

"I came back because Molly sent me a letter asking me to help her get her husband released." Hermione said.

"And how would you do that?" He asked.

"I intended to talk to you." Hermione said.

"And you were under the impression that I would release him if you asked me to?" He said. "In summation, you were trying to exercise your influence over me."

"I didn't have much hope that it would work, but yes."

"So we are clear, you were trying to exert influence over me."

"Molly seemed to think that I could appeal to you to release Arthur Weasley."

"But then you decided to leave instead."

"Arthur was released." Hermione said.

Lucius felt a flush of rage. He hadn't been aware that Arthur Weasley had been released.

“How did you secure his release?” He asked. Options of how she’d achieved that ran through his head and none of them pleased him one little bit.

“Draco.” She said.

“Draco.” He repeated. An image flashed in front of him of her pleading with Draco, the image wanted to take him to another where she was doing more than pleading, but he wouldn’t let it.

“And how did you manage to convince Draco to do such a thing?” He said very carefully. He didn’t want to hate his son, but the thoughts were circling in the back of his mind like sharks.

“I made an agreement with him.” Hermione said watching him.

Lucius felt rage course through his veins.

“Involving?”

“I would leave and not come back, essentially.”

Lucius absorbed what she had just said. Draco had tried to get her to leave. He was seriously not impressed with Draco acting behind his back. Releasing the worm Arthur Weasley in the bargain.

“And in exchange, Draco would release Arthur Weasley.” Lucius filled in.

“Yes.”

“Where is Arthur Weasley now?” Lucius said.

Hermione refused to answer.

“I am an excellent Legimens, Miss Granger.” He said.

“Arthur and Molly have both left England.”

“Wise.” Lucius said. “I wouldn’t have thought Arthur had it in him.”

“Why do you hate Arthur?” Hermione asked, but Lucius ignored her.

“And how, provided Draco had not interfered, would you have persuaded me to release Weasley?” Lucius asked.

“I don’t know.” Hermione said.

The veritaserum ensured that she hadn’t lied.

“And you thought it wise to embark on such a venture without a plan?”

Hermione shrugged.

“And believed that I would have been welcoming of such beseechment?” He asked, very curious as to how she would answer.

“Molly was beside herself, I had to do what I could to help her.” Hermione said, she was obviously uncomfortable, while Lucius felt in his bones that they were close to something. He wasn’t sure what.

“And what would you have been willing to do to achieve your aim?” He asked.

“I don’t know.” She said. “I didn’t think about it.”

“You didn’t think about it?” He said with disbelief. “You were ready to negotiate for an outcome and you hadn’t an understanding of the concessions you were willing to impart? That is foolhardy, even for you.”

“Foolhardy?” Hermione said. “Yes, I can fully admit to that.”

“Do you know nothing about negotiation, girl?” He said. “To go into a negotiation without a plan is ridiculously rash. It could be described as reckless, particularly as your adversary is much more skilled than you.”

“I figured I had the element of surprise.” She said.

“Did you?” He said. “Why would you think something so stupid? You really do disappoint me with your naivety, Miss Granger.”

“You imprisoned Arthur to get me to come back?” She said incredulously.

“Not entirely, but it was a nice perk.” He said. “You do have to answer for your crimes. It was time that you understood that.”

“Crimes?” She said. “What crimes?”

“We already discussed this, Miss Granger.” He said with exasperation.

“Well lets discuss it again, maybe to the point where it actually makes sense.” She said.

“Not today, I am afraid.” He said. “I have an appointment I need to keep. Good day.” He said and left. It had been an informative session. He had a few points he needed to take up with Draco that evening.

Chapter 32

Chapter 31

Lucius didn't go to Azkaban the next day, but he was tempted. He wanted more answers, but he also didn't want to go every day. He had things to do and it was distraction.

Although later on in the day, he picked a random office girl that was roughly Hermione's size and told her to go buy some robes he would send to Hermione. She was still wearing the same clothes she had the day she was caught. A change of clothes would probably be appreciated, might make her more pliable. But the robes the stupid girl came back with here cheap and vulgar, it wouldn't do so he owed for his tailor, who agreed to sew some robes for the girl.

There was no place for her to hang a set of robes in that little cell, so he ordered that she be moved to a larger one, ones usually reserved for paying 'customers'. He expected she would show her gratitude when he saw her next.

He was itching to see her the next day, but refused. He had a feeling that his desire to see her had a tiny component that was more than the urge to interrogate a prisoner, so he refused to go, out of spite.

He returned home that evening to an empty house. He had dinner in the dining room like he'd done just about every night since he was five. Draco was living somewhere else, not something he approved of as the heir to the family belonged at the Manor, but Draco had insisted he needed some time to explore. Lucius wasn't sure he approved of the changes in Draco, but conceded it was natural. Draco had become more serious and more circumspect, which were not bad things. But part of him relished the childishness in Draco.

He had a word with Draco about his interference regarding Miss Granger, although the boy's reasoning was acceptable. Draco felt the girl was trouble and sought to remove her speedily. He still told Draco off in no uncertain terms that he did not need Draco to deal with the girl on his behalf. The girl was no real threat, Draco had overreacted. A trait he got from his mother.

"Lucius." He heard the familiar voice of his wife from the dining room door.

"Narcissa." He said. "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"I just thought I would come see how you are."

"I am as I always am." He said, not really understanding her reasoning. "Once you ceased to be my wife, it is conventional that you give up the privilege to come and go as you please. I think we should stand on convention in this matter. What are you after?"

"Nothing." She said. "I worry about you."

"Worry?" He said. "If that is the case, perhaps you should not have asked for a divorce."

"I think it was necessary." She said.

He didn't quite know what could have been necessary about the business, probably had some personal strife that she had to deal with, although he couldn't think of anything that would bring about her actions. But there were several things he never understood about his wife and he had never seen a reason to rectify that.

"Draco told me that you have been reacquainted with Miss Granger." Narcissa said.

"That is correct." Lucius said ordering a port from an elf. He would normally retire to his study, but since he had company, he would just have to make do until she left.

"Where is she?" Narcissa said.

"In Azkaban."

"Lucius! You have better not tell me you are keeping that girl in Azkaban!" Narcissa said in the raised voice that was the closest he had ever seen her get to a yell.

"She has some actions to answer for."

"Lucius! You cannot..." Narcissa started. "I don't even know what to say. You are a complete brute. You cannot keep the girl in Azkaban, what is the matter with you?"

"Where do you expect me to keep her?" He said. "She cannot be trusted. She had been running some kind of campaign against me, and I will discover her intentions." He wasn't usually so honest, but he felt challenged. He didn't like his behaviour challenged and he wasn't a brute to women. The girl was an enemy, Narcissa had always been too soft for the requirements of the world.

Narcissa was quiet for a moment, contemplative. A look he didn't like on his wife, ex-wife. Frankly a look he didn't need to put up with anymore. He was just about to tell her.

"You should keep her here." Narcissa said. "It is secure, it would prevent her from leaving,"

"But.."

"while at the same time extending the courtesy that is required of a man of your station." She finished in the tone that usually meant she would accept no argument. Not that it meant a great deal in Lucius book.

"I am not required to show undeservables courtesy." Lucius stated.

"It is not acceptable for a man of your station to be brutish to women."

"I am not brutish to women." Lucius defended himself.

"Particularly if people find out about your history with the girl." Narcissa said to drive the point home.

"No one knows about the girl." He said.

"Draco knows, Snape knows." Narcissa said. "Who knows who the girl has told."

He didn't think Draco nor Snape would ever be careless with that information, but it was true that he didn't know who the girl had told. There could be lots of people who knew. His

ex-wife was correct that if people knew about the girl being in Azkaban, it could be a blemish on his character.

“Besides, no one would challenge a girl being kept in luxury as anything untoward. It would not be out of bounds of convention that a bachelor, like yourself, would keep the company of a girl as a guest. It would be much easier to explain than keeping a girl of previous involvement in Azkaban. And it would make it more difficult for her to pursue any accusations against you if it was known she was at a guest in your house. She would not have any credibility.”

“Fine.” He said after thinking it over. “I will bring the girl here.”

Narcissa looked please, he wasn’t sure why. He didn’t like it, but her reasoning was logical. He would bring the girl here. Narcissa left, saying she was off to Spain for a while. Lucius stopped listening.

He waited a whole day before ordering the girl be taken to Malfoy Manor. It did change some things. He would eventually have to release her, he couldn’t keep her around the Manor forever, but for now he would get to the bottom of this. When he was satisfied, he would dispatch her out of the country again.

Hermione had been worried when one of the jailers had come to collect her. He wouldn’t tell her what was going on, but marched her around some of the corridors until they reached another numbered door. She was shoved into another cell, a bigger one with a bigger window. There was more furniture in this room, rough but functional, and there was a set of women’s robes hanging off a hook on the wall.

The robes were not quite black, they had a green shimmer to it as the light caught it. This was expensive material. Its presence confused. They were obviously for her, unless some other poor soul had left them behind. But they looked too new and who would leave a set like this behind.

Her clothes were starting to smell and the smell of the robes hanging there indicated that they were brand new. She wondered if Lucius had gotten them for her. That would be strange. He threw her in jail, then got her nice clothes and a bigger room. She wasn’t sure what he was after, what these strange actions would achieve.

If that was true than everything was at Lucius’ command and not part of some real judicial process. He had complete power over her now. He could do as he wished. Detain her, dress her, control her completely. There was other creature comforts, a blanket, a toothbrush.

She didn’t want to put the robe on, but her own were getting a bit whiffy. She wondered what it would be like to wear material like that. She had never had any clothes made out of much expensive material.

She tried to ignore the robes for a while, but they were hanging there teasing her in a room full of nothing to do. Eventually she had to give into her boredom and try it on. The material slid over her skin, feeling almost like a smooth protective second skin. Such dark colours were not her style, the contrast was too stark for her liking. Too much like him. It made her skin look paler.

It was a beautifully tailored set of robes, which she didn't really feel comfortable in even though they fit perfectly. It was weird wearing his clothes, clothes he provided, sexy and wrong, wrong, wrong.

But now that they were on, she didn't want to take them off and put on her dirty jeans and T-shirt again. The jacket was starting to look a little worse for wear too.

Prison sucked, there was nothing to do. She wondered how he managed to do it for the length of time he did. She wondered what he thought about. She wondered what he did to occupy himself. Wondered what he wished for.

A jailer came back hours later and told her she was being moved again. What could possibly be the purpose of all this moving around, she wondered. What game was he playing with her?

The walk was much longer now, but she had made sure to take her clothes and her blanket with her. The jailer walked her to what obviously was an apparition point and grabbed her arm. He was taking her somewhere, hope flared in her. Maybe she was being released.

She appeared in front of a large forbidding stone house. One she'd never seen before, but she had a feeling this was his house. Now he had called for her, given her nice clothes and called for her. For what purpose, she wondered.

The jailer took her to the door and knocked. An elf answered and confirmed that the master was home. The jailer then left her and walked back to the point they had apparated to. Part of her wanted to beg him to take her with him, but it was an irrational thought. Getting herself out of this situation was not going to happen in Azkaban, the way forward lay inside this building.

Chapter 33

Chapter 33

"You can't keep me here." Hermione said as she was lead into Lucius' study. She was incredibly angry and was trying to keep focus, keep from getting distracted that she was in one of his places, surrounded by his artefacts.

"I can." He said, leaning back in his chair behind the desk. The elf popped away. "I thought this would be more comfortable for you, you have the run of the house and the grounds. Until such time as the matter is resolved. But if you prefer, I could return you to Azkaban."

She really wanted to challenge him, but she didn't want to return to Azkaban, it would serve no purpose and it was beyond uncomfortable in the cold drafty cells.

"We have already discussed the matter." Hermione said. "There is nothing more you can garner."

"We will see."

"This is abuse." Hermione yelled. "You are abusing your position, to get back at an ex... girlfriend."

Lucius raised an eyebrow. "Oh, believe me Miss Granger, I do not hold you in such high esteem. You are an undesirable to be interrogated until you reveal all your intentions and who is behind them. You are a clever girl, for a mudblood, but you have neither the drive nor ambition to be behind this."

"Behind what?" She said. "A freak accident that lead to an impossible relationship. Can't you just accept that it was something that just happened."

"I don't believe in 'freak accidents', Miss Granger." He hissed. "Nothing about this affair is natural. Maybe you are just too naive to believe that there is a cunning mind behind this. Someone put you up to this."

"Is everything a plot to you?" She asked with exasperation. "Do you see a plot in everything?"

"There usually is."

"No there's not." She said. "Its just people getting on with their lives. Not everything is centred around you. Me travelling back in time was an accident. It wasn't a plot against you. My getting involved with you wasn't a plot, it was just..."

"Just what?"

"I thought you were interesting." She said. "And believe me, I am sorrier than you could ever imagine at getting involved with you. It was the dumbest thing I have ever done."

"Well, it is one you will live to regret."

“What do you mean will?” She said. “I have regretted it for a long time now. Just let me go.”

“No.”

“Why not?” She said. “What can you possibly have to gain by keeping me here?”

“I will find the truth.” He said walking up to her. “And we will both know the truth. You started this relationship and tried to walk away when you discovered that you couldn’t achieve your aim. Well, its not that simple, Miss Granger. I am not a man to be dallied with. Someone brought these events around, but you tried to capitalise on them.”

“And what would those aims be?” She asked looking up at him with a look that she hoped conveyed her displeasure.

“To control me.”

“To what end?”

“To suit your kind.”

“So this is a mudblood conspiracy against you?”

“Against my world.”

“Your world.” She said to get her understanding right. “This is your world.”

“It always has been, this world belongs to the old families. We build this world and we own this world, that is the natural order. And we will not stand for it being challenged. Make yourself comfortable, Miss Granger. You will be staying a while.”

With that he left. That was the closest he had gotten to revealing his intentions, she realised. And it wasn’t some line, he truly believed it.

An elf showed her to a room that was supposed to be hers for the duration of her stay. It was an impersonal room, probably a guest room. But it was large, filled with furniture that she probably couldn’t afford if she sold everything she had, which wasn’t much.

The elf told her that dinner was at seven on the dot. If she wasn’t punctual, she would have to go without. She could imagine that was a rule Draco had to live with his whole life. She had nothing to place in the room, the elf had taken her clothes for washing, along with the blanket she had taken with her from Azkaban.

He’d told her she had run of the grounds, but she didn’t want to leave the room. If she did, she would get distracted and possibly forget her fury at being held here. It was very important to hold onto that fury, she knew although not exactly why.

She sat and waited, the room grew dark around her. A clock in the room told her that it was now very close to seven, she wanted to stay in her room, but having to force herself to eat Azkaban food meant that she really was famished. She reasoned with herself that she would be much better prepared for dealing with him if she wasn’t malnourished.

The halls were dark as she left her room. She made her way downstairs, it wasn’t hard to find the dining room as it was the only place lit up.

He sat at the end of the large table.

"You are late." He said in a cool, dry tone.

"I got lost." She lied.

"You will be excused this once."

Her ingrained manners urged her to say 'thank you', but she forced it down. The smell of the food made her eyes water. It was some kind of roast beef, something French with a rich buttery sauce. She wondered if he ate this kind of food every night.

The beef just melted in her mouth and she had to stop herself from groaning with the yumminess of it. Maybe it was that she was half starved, but this was the best meal she had ever had.

He ate with military precision, no wastage in his movements. Didn't he even enjoy the meal that had been so exquisitely prepared? He finished quickly.

"I will retire to the study." He said without looking at her. "Good night, Miss Granger."

Wait, she thought, I am supposed to be clawing your eyes out, but he was gone. She'd gotten too waylaid by her hunger. The dining room was huge and she felt tiny in it. Not exactly cosy this house.

She walked back to her bedroom after she finished. She knew he was in his study as she saw light under the door. The rest of the house was dark, there was the occasional light along the corridors, but just enough to ensure you could see major obstacles. Where was everyone, why was the only person here. Where was Draco, where was his wife?

Hermione felt a little disconcerted. He got her here to interrogate her, but now that she's here, he is just ignoring her. Treating her like an unwanted house guest. Then why did he bring her here? Part of her wanted to march back downstairs and demand answers, but she was too tired. In fact, bed was seriously calling. A warm bed, with blankets that allowed her to move beyond the curled up position lest she get assaulted with cold damp bedsheets.

Hermione slept like the dead. Lucius was gone from the house before she got up, so she was left in the large house on her own. She gave her curiosity a bit of rein as there was no audience for her ire. She went into Lucius' study and looked around. She didn't dare touch anything, it would probably kill her. She looked at the pictures of the Malfoy family on the walls. Their arrogant sneers, which seemed to run in the family. Not so much on Lucius, but Draco definitely had it.

She didn't dare walk into the bedrooms. She didn't want to know where he slept. She had seen him sleep a few times in Austria, but the thought made her feel very uncomfortable. The complete vulnerability of his sleeping form, it made her stomach flip.

Dinner was at seven again that night. Lucius was there when she got to the dining room. No one else was. Again he ate without any wastage and retired to the study as soon as he finished. She wasn't sure that a word was even muttered throughout. What was this torture by ignoring? Was this some evolved pureblood interrogation technique?

Lucius was barred inside his comfortable study. This was his space, his alone. His bedroom was too, but it was more functional than anything else. He heard the girl walk

passed in the hall outside. He didn't like having her here. He felt her presence as soon as he apparated home. It was like a stickiness in the air. He wanted to put her under the Cruciatus curse for just existing, but was too worried that he'd find that he couldn't.

She was less angry today, which was good. Her angry stare did seem to reach inside of him and that bothered him. Cool was better. She still wore the robes he'd had made for her, they fit her well. Accented her assets, which while he could appreciate the craftsmanship in the work, it also highlighted the things that had so captivated him before. Maybe it had been better to stick with the awful dress that girl had bought. He'd fired the girl. Turned out she'd been a halfblood anyway, which explain the atrocious taste.

He sipped on his whiskey and tried his best not to imagine her taking her clothes off upstairs, getting ready for bed. It was too early for bed, but his mind did not seem to account for such practicalities. Part of him wanted to drink until he could forget such images, but he knew that drinking himself into oblivion would probably result in some actions he would regret. Such images only drove a drunken brain, didn't they?

He chided himself for letting Narcissa talk him into bringing the girl here. He loathed to admit his weakness, but on the other hand it was good to know what to watch out for in oneself. And his weakness for the mudblood girl was such a thing. Something that needed to be firmly managed.

Chapter 34

Chapter 34

Hermione had stayed at Malfoy Manor for a few days now. She saw Lucius at dinner, where they pretty much ate in silence, before he would retire to his study. She was kind of wishing for interrogation because she hadn't had an ounce of conversation for equally as many days. The lack of interaction was getting to her. The only thing she could do was to explore the house.

She had gone a little further afield each day and today she had been intrigued by a pretty box. A box with some charm on it which meant it was now attached to her fingers. She had tried in vain to pull it off, recognising that it was some kind of anti-thief charm. It stung a bit, but was more embarrassing than anything. So now she was sitting waiting for Lucius to return home so he could remove the box from her fingers.

She had told the elf to notify her when he came home and he did so shortly after six. She sought him out in the study, where he looked annoyed at the interruption. She showed him the box and he infuriatingly raised an eyebrow.

"Going through my things?" He said.

"There is precious little else to do. I am going spare in this house."

"I didn't tell you that you could go through my things." He said coldly. "You can just wear that box."

"Lucius!" She said, worried that he was serious.

"You shouldn't go where you don't belong." He said challenging.

"I don't belong in this house." She said.

"That is true."

"Release me, Lucius." She pleaded.

"No." He said.

"Why not?" She said. "What can you possibly gain by keeping me here."

"To punish you." Lucius said.

"Your reasons change every time I talk to you." Hermione accused.

"It is my prerogative."

"No it isn't." She said. "You can't keep a prisoner at your house for no rhyme or reason and say its your prerogative."

"Be nice or I won't take the box off."

Hermione fumed at him. "This isn't fair."

"What you did to me wasn't fair." He said.

"What exactly is it that I did to you?" She said. "Its not like I was holding a wand to your head."

"You preyed on me at a vulnerable time."

"Really, because when I got back, you were pretty damned insistent."

"With the purpose of you fixing the damage you caused." He was getting frustrated.

"And I did, I went away."

"Well, go away now."

"Take the box off."

"No."

"Or I won't go away." She said. "I will sit here and prattle on. About really annoying stuff like equal rights, magical creature rights. How about elf liberation?"

"You want to threaten me?" He asked with a sharpness that worried her.

"Take the box off."

"Leave."

"No."

He got up from behind the desk and walked around. Hermione felt a lump of anxiety in her chest as he approached her. But he hadn't pulled his wand out, which she feared. He came up and stood in front of her on the side table she had planted herself on. If all else failed she could hit him with the box.

He stood very close and looked down at her. He was intimidating her and he was very successful at it. He took up pretty much all the space in her view and she was trying really hard to find somewhere non-committal to keep her gaze. Somewhere not on his body because that would just highlight the situation.

"If you wish to stay," He said in a low, cool voice, "I am sure I can find a purpose for you."

His fingers touched her bare knee and slowly travelled up her thigh exposing the skin as he pushed the material of her robes up. The touch was uncomfortable like a electric current, it left a trail after her fingers that almost stung.

Hermione refused to look at him, her whole body was almost shaking with nervousness. He was trying to sexually intimidate her, she was pretty sure that was his purpose. And she also had a fairly strong feeling that if she looked him in the eye, she would lose herself there. She refused to look at him, if she did, the last year had been completely wasted. Everything she had created for herself, the freedom she had gained. The potential for a real future.

“You can’t do this to me.” She said quietly, so very still, trying to preserve the situation. “You cannot treat prisoners like this, it is unconscionable.”

“While this is not a tactic I have used with prisoners before, Miss Granger.” He said. “I am not sure there are any restrictions on what I can do to prisoners. And as for it being unconscionable, I would have to agree, but it is no difference from what you did to me.”

Hermione stayed perfectly still as his fingers still ran up her thigh. She stayed still like someone seeing a poisonous and irate snake. If there had been a way she could physically back away slowly, she probably would.

The moment passed and he pulled his fingers away. And although she wasn’t looking at him in anyway, she could feel the full bore gaze of his remove from her person. His fingers reappeared on her wrist and Hermione gasped.

He pulled out his wand and muttered something at the box which fell off her fingers.

“I suggest you stay out of trouble, Miss Granger.” He said and stepped back towards his desk. “I don’t like to be trifled with. Neither do my things.”

Hermione nodded and slunk down from the table. She wanted to argue but he had outplayed her, he had placed his boundary way beyond where she was willing to go. And now they had fairly well established that he could use sex to threaten her, control her. Because now they both knew that she was afraid to go there. She had too much to lose.

The girl practically ran from the room. Lucius sat down in his seat again. His heart was beating fast and hard, like he’d been running for a while and ready for another mile or so. He’d won. He had put her in her place. He hadn’t intended on it, the physical intimidation, which in equal measure could have been a proposition if she had responded positively.

He loved that he had won, but there was a fear that he had opened Pandora’s box. His body was tight, ready for fight or flight. Ready to claim. And he had gotten an intimate re-acquaintance with her mind altering scent. A scent that was now inextricable linked with sex in his mind.

He knew that if she’d given a millimetre he wouldn’t have been able to stop. He took a sip of his whiskey and whirled in around his mouth. Not too clever, deploying a weapon he in reality probably had little control over. Not too smart at all. She had just riled him up with her insubordination.

But luckily she had backed down, so if nothing else, it was worth the gamble. The end justified the means, in this case. He just hoped the tactic wouldn’t have unintended consequences. He was worried that it would unlock the things he had forcefully locked away when she left, and refused to revisit, using the energy to pursue his plans.

His body eventually calmed down, leaving a ache that he refused to acknowledge.

She refused to look at him during dinner. She ate quickly and excused herself before he was finished. Blissful silence prevailed, as did the assurance of victory. Its heady drug coursed through his veins. He tried to temper it, there was temptation in pleasure, as it may seek other pleasures.

He didn't drink too much that night, much less than he normally did these days. But the lack of alcohol was having an effect when he went to bed, as sleep eluded him. His body ached for the feelings of victory, missed it with a tension that sat in every muscle.

It would be so easy to seek her out. She was just down the hall. He also knew that when it came down to her, her fight was pretty shallow before she gave in. He had pushed her over the edge of her trepidation, convictions a few times now. Just a little nudge and she would submit. It was doing his head in thinking about it. He suspected that there would be consequences to his actions today, and he was suffering them now.

Nothing a dose of dreamless sleep wouldn't cure. He had a feeling that foregoing dreams that night might be a good idea.

Chapter 35

Chapter 35

Hermione hated being at the mansion. It was so big and quiet. There was nothing around. The Malfoys had built for privacy and they got it in spades. She only saw Lucius in the evenings. With the exception of her dreams, where he was making a steady appearance. They would eat and then he would retire to his study. He left the door open so she could see him as she walked passed.

She wasn't sure whether it was an invitation. It would be odd, wouldn't it? You don't invite prisoners in for interrogation. The circumstances didn't fit her status, so what was going on?

She watched him from the door. He was sitting in his chair, reading some documents in his lap. Part of her wanted to charge in there and demand... something, that he release her. But there was another part of her that knew that engaging with him was a bad idea. Yesterday had proved how easily things went sideways around him. A bad idea exactly for the reason that she wanted to. And she had worked so hard to go in the other direction, away from the loony 'I'm in love with an unrepentant Death Eater' way.

She watched his pale, strong fingers move along the crisp parchment. Damn rich men and their lovely parchment. Then move to the glass of whiskey by his chair.

If only she knew what he wanted. He had her here, worked tirelessly to get rid of her kind, then kept her here at his house without any seeming purpose. It didn't make sense. She knew if she started wondering about what was going on in his head, she'd be here all day, probably all year. She tore her gaze away and walked back to her bedroom. She had to get out of here. She couldn't bounce around this huge house with only him for company.

The temptation to walk into his study would only increase over time, and doing so would be complete lunacy. Sitting down there all alone, with an open door. Like he wanted her to step through it. Waiting.

Well, she had her stupid moments, but she also had some semblance of self preservation.

Hermione found herself in the library the next day. It was magnificent. It smelled of old books, but she could also faintly smell him there. He obviously spent time in there. It was comforting and disturbing at the same time.

All of a sudden the house gave itself over to noise. It couldn't have been Lucius, he was quiet. Maybe it was Draco. Hermione didn't want to see him, so she stayed put. Staying in the library was probably the safest place to be when Draco was around.

A pop gave Hermione a start as a house elf appeared nearby.

"The mistr.." the elf started. "The Lady Malfoy wants to see you."

Hermione stood there and stared at the little creature for a while. Mrs. Malfoy wanted to see her, she repeated in her mind. This can't be good. Lucius wasn't here and she didn't have a wand. She was completely unprotected if Narcissa Malfoy took offense to the fact that she had been sleeping with her husband.

Hermione was mortified, but she would not hide nor deny what had happened. She was prepared to take responsibility for her actions, even if it meant that she was about to be hexed into oblivion. All she could do was assure her that it was no longer happening, although the fact that she was here looked pretty incriminating.

Hermione walked as the elf directed her into a sitting room. Narcissa Malfoy was sitting with her cloak on in one of the little sitting areas.

"There you are." Narcissa said in a voice that was much friendlier than she expected. "I am Narcissa Malfoy, I don't believe we have been introduced."

"Hermione Granger." She said and extended her hand to meet Narcissa's outreached one.

"I have asked the elf to prepare some tea." Narcissa said. "I hope you haven't had any yet this afternoon."

"No." Hermione said. Still at a loss as to what was going on.

"Please sit. Indulge me."

"Lucius is not here." Hermione finally said.

"I would imagine not." Narcissa said as the house elf appeared with a tray that clinked every step it took.

"Have you returned from holiday?" Hermione asked before she could help herself.

Narcissa took her cup of tea and looked at Hermione pointedly.

"He has not told you."

"Told me what?"

"That I do not live here." Narcissa said. "That we are divorced and that I live elsewhere."

Hermione's mouth dropped open. "No." She said. "Why would he? I am a prisoner here. It is typically not something one discusses with the detained."

Narcissa seemed to dismiss what she said with a little flourish of her hand. It grated Hermione how easily the woman seemed to dismiss her misfortune.

"You are here because he is in love with you." The woman said to Hermione's astonishment.

"I am a muggleborn." Hermione said like it explained everything that was wrong with this whole mess.

"Yes." The woman said. "Maybe that is in part responsible for why it happened. I was hoping the divorce would propel him to seek you out, but he is stubborn as a mule."

Hermione could only stare at her. Were all the purebloods insane.

“Love is of course a state for which he couldn’t be less suitable.” Narcissa continued.

At least that made sense.

“You must indulge his inexperience.”

“He is holding me prisoner.”

“He is tactless.”

“Tactless?” Hermione said. “How about immoral, conceited, arrogant and probably mad as a march hare.”

“He is in uncharted waters.”

“That doesn’t excuse anything.” Hermione said. “And he is a Death Eater.”

“He has been cleared of all allegations.” Narcissa defended him. “He worked tirelessly for the Order of the Phoenix to destroy Voldemort.”

“And now he is trying to recreate that world on his own.” Hermione said a bit more heated now. “I suspect he got rid of Voldemort so he could have a clear path himself.”

“He is not so gauche.” Narcissa said. “Let’s not deceive ourselves. He is a ruthless man when he is trying to achieve his aims.”

The woman was making sense again.

“He works tirelessly to achieve the aims of this family.” Narcissa said looking around the house like it was haunted.

“Which is what exactly?” Hermione demanded. “Oppression of the masses? Exclusion of ‘undesirables’? He is tearing this world apart.”

“Sometimes there is more rhyme than there is reason in what he does.” Narcissa said. “He is a capable and ambitious man. But he’d had the pureblood ideals ground into him since the day he was born. He knows no other ways.”

“That doesn’t excuse what he does.” Hermione said.

“No, perhaps not, but it does explain much of it.”

“It isn’t right what he is doing.” Hermione said.

“No, you are right.” Narcissa said. “That is why you are here.”

“What?”

“You temper him.” Narcissa said. “He was happy when you were together. You seem to capture his focus. Dull some of his sharper edges. I was very worried at first, but you are a good influence on him.”

“You must be out of your mind.” Hermione said. “Irrespective, he is not a good influence on me.”

“You should marry him.” Narcissa said.

“I beg your pardon?”

“You should marry him. You will absorb his attention. Away from other things. Dangerous paths. Happiness tempers that drive in him that can be so destructive. Poor Draco is trying desperately to protect him.”

“So I should marry him so Draco doesn’t have to worry?” Hermione said. “You people are mad.”

“Well, there is that.” Narcissa said. “New blood does us good. Purity has been beaten into his since he was a small boy, but there is no doubt that purity has its failures. You children would be strong. You have an excellent mind I hear.”

“I can’t believe this.” Hermione said. “He is a pureblood supremacist. He isn’t going to have children with me.”

“I don’t think he would be able to deny you. He might grumble a bit, but he wants to please you.”

“He certainly can deny me my freedom.”

“You hurt him by rejecting him.”

“Another reason to stay as far away as humanly possible.” Hermione said and stood up. “I am not listening to any more of this. You are all mad.”

“You love him.”

“I am leaving.” Hermione said and walked towards the door. It was locked when she tried.

“They will kill him this time.” Narcissa said in a much sterner voice.

“Not my problem.” Hermione said. “Let me out this instance.”

“I have never been able to influence him, but you can.” Narcissa said. “You can divert his attention before it is too late. They will be no getting out of it if this continued. He doesn’t understand that the natural order will prevail, that he cannot generate enough energy to keep the state he creates in perpetuity. They will give him the kiss.”

“I want to leave now.” Hermione demanded feeling trapped and cornered. “What makes you think he would listen to me? I would just come along for the ride. You people are obsessed with the natural order. Well the natural order is not me and Lucius Malfoy together in the same house.”

“You underestimate your hold on him.”

“He is particularly concerned that I am trying to influence him.”

“That is because he is aware that you have that power over him.”

“This is ridiculous.” Hermione said. “I will not listen any more. Open this door.”

The door opened and Hermione escaped as fast as she could. She felt hunted and abused. She raced up to her room and firmly closed the door behind her. Hermione hated the conversation she had just had and all the things it covered. The idea that she could save him, worse, the idea that he would be killed if she didn’t. She was not responsible for him. How dare they try to make her.

Chapter 36

Chapter 36

Hermione felt distressed after her tea with Narcissa, which ended up with not having much tea at all. Plus the 'have my husband or he'll die' ultimatum. Which was the ultimate unfairness.

She wasn't responsible for him. He was a nasty piece of work and that wasn't her doing. He was like that well before she came on the scene, even if it was a round about way. She didn't turn him into a pureblood supremacist, or a Death Eater, or even the Lord Protector, whatever. And not only that, it was him that insisted on a relationship, one that was obviously doomed from the very beginning. She had just faced up to the facts.

She had to go outside to pace, the brisk coldness outside seemed to calm her. And now, they were all holding up their hands and saying, 'Please deal with the mess we've made', and 'give up your life in the process'.

Mother effin, bastard... cunt. Hermione thought of the worst word she could think of. She probably couldn't say it out loud, but she could say it in her head. The occasion called for it.

If the wards would let her, she would literally run from here and it didn't matter that she really didn't have any idea where she was. There seemed to be acres of forest in every direction. There were probably wolves in those forests. Probably magical ones that only ate mudbloods.

She stomped around for a while, until she got too cold and had to concede that she either had to go inside or retrieve a coat.

The house was quiet when she got inside, Narcissa had obviously gone wherever she kept herself these days. Hermione walked up the stairs and down the hall that led to her bedroom.

A photo caught her eye as she walked past a side table in the hall. It wasn't very large and she hadn't noticed it before. She wasn't entirely sure it had been there before. It was a photo of Lucius, when he was younger. He was holding up his letter from Hogwarts, it must have been his entrance letter, making him around eleven. He was smiling, obviously proud, but there was still that little hint of uncertainty.

He looked adorable with the blond hair cut short, neatly brushed, even then. He looked so young, his face still a little rounded with childhood puppy fat. It made her smile how cute he was. Why was he uncertain? Everyone she knew had been over the moon, she certainly had. She didn't like seeing that uncertainty, the niggle of fear in a face so young.

Narcissa had hinted something about his childhood. His childhood, here in this house, where he was taught the twisted values he holds. There was something innocent about him when she'd known him back at Hogwarts, something that made her fall in love with him, but there had also been something jaded even then. Something he was trying to escape, some burden weighing him down.

But it was more than obvious that it had caught up with him in the end, whatever it was he was trying to get away from. When she looked at the young face in the photo, she got the feeling that he'd been screwed over by everybody. What parents raise a boy who looks fearful in what should be one of the happiest childhood moments?

She placed the photo back with disgust. She hated this house. She tried to block it all out as she returned to her room.

She tried, but Narcissa's words kept on haunting her. She'd said he was happy when he was with her. That she tempered him, pulled his attention away. That he loved her. Perhaps she provided the escape he seemed to seek.

But that's not fair. A man like him is not capable of love, she reasoned. She had never asked him to fall in love, well she had, but that was a long time ago, with someone less damaged. She was only a girl at the time, too young to be responsible for the consequences.

She melted a bit when she thought of the young him, the lighter, funnier and unduly restrained boy. He'd deserved so much better than he got in life.

And now, he was this damaged man who for all intents and purposes was unlovable. Narcissa was right though, eventually it will all catch up if he continues, they will give him the kiss, Hermione admitted. She could see him fighting his restraints as the dementor approached him, fight to the very end.

If he loved her, he'd want her there when it happened. She would not be able to bear not being there, but she would not be able to bear being there either. It would break her either way.

It was beyond unfair, but she was tied into him whether she liked it or not. She would have to give up all possible futures if she went ahead and tried to save him. Or she could walk away and leave him to his fate, which would probably destroy her, or a good deal of her.

Then she would be another in the line of people who screwed him over from start to finish. And that didn't sit well, you didn't walk away from a wounded animal just because it was growling at you.

Hermione wished she could just clear her mind. Wished she could walk around Diagon Alley for a while until everything in her head just settled down. Because the truth she didn't want to confront was that she didn't really have an option. It just wasn't in her to walk away now. But it was nice to ignore that and believe that she had a choice, that this was not her responsibility and therefore she could just walk away.

The only course of action that seemed reasonable at the moment was to get something to eat. So she walked down to the kitchen. A place in the Malfoy Mansion she was pretty sure had never been seen by any Malfoy.

She heard some rustling in one of the rooms on the way.

"Granger." Draco said, looking through a stack of papers. "Been crying? Although you look remarkably well otherwise."

"He is holding me here." She said.

"I know." He said. "Glad to see you're not in the dungeon."

“Thanks, I guess.” She said. She watched him for a while.

“I can’t help you.” He said. “I tried to get you out of sight before he knew you were back, but I can’t help you now. It would be a direct defiance and I don’t like you that much.”

He found what he was looking for and walked past her.

“He...” Draco started but couldn’t finish. “I don’t know Granger. Mother seems to think you mean something to him. I guess that is the only thing you’ve got. Use it well. I would say that he means well, but that would be a lie. I have to go. Good luck.”

Hermione watched Draco flood away. She wasn’t sure how to take that conversation with Draco. Draco had been trying to keep her away from Lucius, but she was positive it was for Lucius’ benefit and not hers. He didn’t give a stuff about her, nothing personal. Maybe Draco believed that she was one of the things that might come to light and be one of the charges against him in the end. One of the things Draco was trying to run around and fix before objections. She had the feeling that Draco was losing the battle.

Lucius returned that evening. Dinner with the girl was a quiet affair, as per usual. She asked how his day had been. He’d said it had been fine, he didn’t want to mention the renegotiation with some of the goblin population. He was not in the mood for one of her lectures on equity. He knew her well enough to know how she felt about relations with the lesser classes.

Although he did consider bringing it up just to see the fire in her eyes. There seemed to be less of it tonight. Or more of it. She wasn’t ignoring him during dinner, which made him suspicious. She also didn’t rush off after a few bites.

Lucius excused himself after finishing his dinner and retreated back to his study where he would nurse the first of a few whiskeys, after a port perhaps. Alcohol was a tried and true pleasure in life. Small in comparison to some, but it could always be depended upon.

He was surprised when the girl showed up at the door to his study. He both wanted and didn’t want her there. Part of him relished at her seeking him out, part of him hated it. He wasn’t sure what he hated, but there was potential for vexation. For pain if he was completely honest.

“Would you like a drink?” He said and watched her as she sat down on the side table, the one where she had sat a few days ago, the one where they had discussed a bit of intimacy. The point of her choice of location did not escape him.

“Perhaps a small one.” She said.

He watched her for a second, then grabbed one of the glasses on his side table and poured her a whiskey. He stood up and brought the glass to her. Their fingers touched when he handed the glass to her and he felt electricity run up his arm. He savoured the sensation as he returned to his chair.

She sipped on her glass, but she didn’t love the whiskey, she tolerated it.

“And what brings you here this evening?” He asked. He was both excited and suspicious. Something had changed. She had made a decision of some sort. He would just have to wait until she revealed her intentions.

"I thought perhaps it was time we talked."

"And what do you wish to talk about?"

"I don't know. The situation."

"Which situation?"

"This situation." She pointed between them. He wasn't sure he wanted to talk about it, the situation had been something he had ignored for some time now. She was a prisoner, but he treated her like a guest. One from which he wanted benefits, but wasn't sure he wanted to go there. It was dangerous territory. But thoughts of her body tortured him every night.

She continued when he didn't say anything. "I want to bargain."

"Bargain?" He said. "I think we have been down this route before and pleasurable as it was, it didn't suit you."

"You know it did." She said. "I was worried that I would become addicted. There was definitely that potential."

"And you had to leave before that eventuated?" He asked. He liked the sound of that. Her being addicted to him, it sat well with him. Addiction is good, it is loyalty without return. "And you are not so worried about addiction now?" He said enunciating each word.

"I am older now, stronger and more experienced." She said. He smiled.

He wasn't sure he believed her, she was a year older. A year rarely made anyone wiser in light of addiction. But he didn't feel the need to challenge her, her craving him was only in his benefit. He could feel the potential vibrate through him. Feel his body tensing in anticipation, both to clench the deal and the activities that were to come. The sweet rewards.

"And the bargain?" He said.

"Same as before." She said. She was looking a bit flushed, which only riled him on. He felt like he was watching a wounded animal and he was going in for the kill. But then the terms settled into his brain.

"Mudblood children allowed back at Hogwarts." He said. That would be a big step backwards. It had been the first in many steps and a big gesture that would be noticed by everyone.

"I think we are a bit beyond such things." He said in a serious tone. The girl was asking too much. "I can't do that."

Hermione leaned back on the wall and looked at him from her higher vantage point. She sighed loudly and rubbed her hands down her thighs towards her knees. She slowly pulled them up again on the slightly parted inner thighs.

"That's a shame." She said and hopped down from the side table. "Well, I guess I will head off to bed then. Good night."

He watched as she walked out of the study. He watched the empty space she left behind for a while. He hadn't quite expected that, the deal to fall through without a negotiation. Blood was coursing through his body with every part of him swimming in tension. He'd known

nothing good would come out of her walking through that door tonight. He was definitely worse off, knowing she was ready to have him tonight. He could have had her right now, here on the floor. Working his way to bliss in her tight, pert body.

He slammed his glass down hard enough to put a dent on the wood. The terms were too high, it would mean undoing things, plans. He couldn't do that. And he was much stronger than any unsatisfying dreams he would invariably have that night. Bitch.

Chapter 37

Chapter 37

Lucius was grumpy the next day. His sleep had been troubled and he felt tired. There was no doubt, he wanted the girl, but the price was too high, it would mean undoing the good work he'd done. No girl was worth that. He wasn't an animal after all, he could control his baser instincts. He used to be supremely good at it.

He left the house early, but nothing seemed to go right for him today. People were annoying him, they usually did, but even the less annoying ones were getting on his wick.

He wondered what the girl was doing. Roaming around in his house, all alone. The thought was kind of erotic, but he dismissed them as soon as they entered his mind. It would not do that he was thinking about her all the time. Maybe he should get rid of her, he wondered. Let her go back to where she'd been. But the thought didn't sit right, something in him flatly refused and he couldn't quite understand why as she completely disturbed his peace.

He got a note from Draco saying he would be joining them for dinner. Lucius wasn't too excited about it. He didn't like having people for dinner when she was there, even if it was his son. He liked the idea of having her separate from the rest of his life, but admittedly it wasn't working out that way. Narcissa was endlessly fascinated with the girl, for whatever reason, now his son would be spending the evening in their, her presence.

He didn't like it, but had some things to discuss with the boy. He put his discomfort aside. The day passed slowly.

He was aware of the fact that he didn't quite know what to expect when he apparated home in the evenings. It added a degree of uncertainty to his life. She could be angry, she could be seductive, or she could be ignoring him. The lack of control over her bristled.

But tonight he heard voices, a spike of anger shot through him. He didn't like the idea of others speaking to her. He recognised the voice of his son, he'd forgotten about the dinner engagement. He still didn't like it.

He found them sitting at the dinner table, imbibing pre-dinner drinks. They looked civil. They weren't fighting. He would prefer it if they were fighting. It would be safer if they didn't like each other. He was exceedingly happy that Draco lived elsewhere.

"I was just telling Granger that she should see the Hester Alagawrath exhibit at Cosco's. The innateness would appeal to her." Draco said.

"I told you." Hermione said. "I am not allowed to leave the house."

"Nonsense." Draco said. "Isn't that right father. Miss Granger is a guest here."

Lucius would have burned his son into oblivion if he could manage to shoot hot flames out of his eyes. He didn't like being challenged or having his established structures challenged. "Of course, she is a guest. She must enjoy the cultural delights of our community."

Hermione's eyebrows raised slightly. "In that case, I might go along and see the exhibit tomorrow. I would be much easier if I had my wand."

"Don't push your luck." He warned quietly. He had conceded much more than he wanted to already. In fact, he wanted to throw them both out of the room and cancel dinner, but manner were too ingrained.

Draco continued to chat about some stupid quidditch game while dinner was brought in. He was putting on a show for the girl, he realised. Draco was rarely animated during dinner. He wondered if the boy had designs on the girl. A wave of anger travelled through him. Rage flared within him every time she looked in Draco's direction. It wasn't necessarily suggestive, but it irked him none the less.

She did look amazing the red dress she was wearing. Doing her best to highlight her Gryffindor colours. Red did suit her very well, it made her skin look like caramel. The dress wasn't revealing, but it skimmed her curves suggestively. At least to someone who was familiar with the curves underneath. He didn't like others looking at her.

Dinner progressed in a slower than usual fashion. Draco even made her laugh once. He experienced intense jealousy because making her laugh was not something he had readily achieved. Well, not since his Hogwarts memories. Her laugh now, brought those memories back. But he used to be able to make her laugh. He wondered for a moment if there was something lacking in him now. Or perhaps laughing was only for the young. Laughter was foolish anyway, he knew.

After dinner they retired to the drawing room. He used to particularly enjoy this time with his son, but with the girl here, he didn't. Maybe he should get rid of her, then maybe his life would go back to normal. Saying that, though, he had not enjoyed the time when she left for the colonies. But maybe he was passed whatever vexed him. On the other hand, in the colonies she would be at the mercy of all sorts of annoying and well meaning people.

Draco and the girl had finally gotten into an argument. It was like music to his ears. Draco excused himself and retreated to his study, saying he had some business to attend to. The exact same thing that he did when something annoyed him. It pleased him to see his own behaviour in his son.

"Are you going to let me go?" Hermione asked.

"No." He answered before he really had any time to think about it.

"But you will let me leave the house." Hermione said. "So I am allowed to leave the house, but not to leave. You know, guests are allowed to depart when they want to."

"Your status is still in dispute."

"Dispute?" She said. "Is there another party involved with this other than you? I would really like to hear these allegations against me."

He refused to answer.

"Because, all I can see," she said, "is that you're keeping me here without cause."

"I suppose that is a privilege of mine." He said. "I can keep you here, as long as I want, as I see fit."

She stood up and put her glass down. She was angry, he could tell. She walked behind his chair towards the door. His head got yanked back by a force. He identified the localised pain and realised that she had pulled his hair.

A levy holding back all his indignity, rage and discomfort broke with this act. This would not do. Adrenalin coursed through his veins as he stood up. He pursued her. We could not show the indignity of running, he walked briskly after her. She walked briskly as well, down the corridor and up the stairs.

He wasn't sure what he was going to do, but he was going to do something. He had to exercise all this pent up aggravation that she had caused. The ceaseless disruption to his life. He would bring order. He would exercise control.

She had made it to the hall up the stairs by the time he clasped his hand around her elbow. He yanked her back and got his hand around her neck. She stared up at him with defiance in her eyes.

He pushed her back against the wall, it made a slight thud. Draco, in his study, did not seem to notice. They were both complicit in their silence. He was slightly surprised that she didn't shout out. But she remained silent.

He wasn't putting pressure on her neck, but he did hold her in place. Her skin felt so soft and warm. He could feel her pulse under his fingers. Calling him like a siren to its steady beat. He moved his thumb along her jaw, its soft curve, with the firm bone underneath. He shouldn't be doing this, his mind screamed at him, but his thumb continued on its path. His mind transfixed when it reached her soft lips. He stroked the bottom lip, felt her breath on his skin.

He wasn't entirely sure how, but his thumb seemed so slip inside her lips and surrounded by the wet warmth inside. The sensation made him gasp, and practically loose his senses completely as her tongue moved against the sensitive skin of this thumb pad. He couldn't tear his eyes away, he wanted to taste her, more than anything he could recall ever wanting.

He had absolutely no control at all when he moved closer, moved to taste her. Her lips parted to him and he was lost in her mouth, feeling the warmth of her body against him. Her legs wrapped around him, parting in welcome. The deeply seductive notion of being wanted. It was not something he was well used to, he was tolerated or deferred for his power and his money, or what he would achieve for people, but not plain old wanted.

It demanded to be explored. He kissed her neck and listened to the little gasps coming from her. His skin on fire where she stroked his back, pulling him closer. His offending thumb which had caused all this trouble demanded more, it travelled up her thigh, exploring the smooth skin, but heading towards her centre. The warm moist folds only confirmed that he was wanted. Knowledge hitting him like a blow to the chest.

He couldn't pull back even if he wanted to. Something inside him needed this, needed to be wanted. He managed to free himself and slide into her warm, tight body. He might just give up the ghost now, because there was nothing beyond this. This silent communion.

He could feel her body start to clench around his as he repeated pumped into her, which brought his quivering world into a higher and more urgent level of need. He gasped silently into her mouth as she drew shuttering breaths. He wanted her to take his breath. He wanted

her to take from him as she was just about to take his essence. His world suddenly melted outside of the exquisite join of flesh.

Oh, he hadn't meant to do that. He was still buried in her body, and it was still glorious, but he hadn't meant to. She was just so... He hated his own weakness. She was his weakness, she had been for a while now. He was weak around her and he was miserable away from her. The trap she had laid was complete and inescapable.

He pulled back from her and straightened. There were no indications that their indiscretion had been noticed. She was flushed and leaning on the wall. She still looked so tempting in the dishevelled afterglow. At least he affected her. She was discomposed and it pleased him.

"I recall our negotiation." He said sharply. He never back down from an agreement come hell or highwater. If you were silly enough to enter a bad agreement, you were deserving of living with its consequences. He had told his business partners that once or twice.

Hermione nodded. He'd always felt safe within the confines of a bargain, but it was grating on him now and he wasn't sure if it was because it was a bargain he was compelled into or because he yearned for an absence of strings. That was just ridiculous, he chided himself, bargains were the lifeblood, parties knew where they stood and what was expected. It would be absolute chaos in their absence.

"I find your charms compelling." He said trying to steady his breath. "Hence I must fulfil the terms. You might regret this bargain, Miss Granger. I will give you a last chance to back out, because I fully intend to utilise my side of the bargain to my hearts contend. I will wear you out."

"I can take it." She said with challenge. "I won't be backing out."

He was both pleased and displeased. Displeased logically, completely over the moon with everything else.

Chapter 38

Chapter 38

Hermione stayed with Lucius that night, after Draco left. She stayed in his bed, all night. They had sex again in the dark. No rush this time, no one to hide from, the house was quiet and dark, and nothing else existed but the caresses and kisses. Hermione held nothing back. She hadn't noticed the constant tension of denying wanting him until she stopped denying. He was well and truly under her skin.

She had fought so hard to be somewhere else, but now that she was here, there was no other place where she wanted to be. The world didn't exist outside of this bed. She couldn't stop touching him, even while sleeping, she wanted some part of her to touch him.

They did it again first thing in the morning and then she watched him dress. A meticulous process, each step considered like putting on armour. He became sterner and more forbidding as his shell came on. Each step moving him further away from the more gentle version of him that she had given herself to during the night.

She ached to take those clothes off, but he had to leave. Hermione considered tempting him back, but she was a little sore and in dire need of a hot bath.

And a good eight hours stretched before she saw him again.

The evenings became her favourite time, other than the sex, because he would come home, they would have dinner then talk as he had his port. Actually they would argue. His stance on things were different from hers, and they would debate the merits. It would get heated and that would sometimes lead to kissing, or even rushed desperate sex when passions got too inflamed.

He liked arguing with her, she could tell. He made his points well, in the end it boiled down to perceptions, beliefs and stereotypes. Over time they pinpointed their fundamental differences, but they were also able to agree on some common fundamental objectives.

Lucius was good to his word, he let the muggleborns back into Hogwarts. He didn't like it and it was not part of his vision for achieving a good future. His means to a good future did not include strangers coming in and ruining things. And when Hermione demanded that he specify exactly how she had ruined things, he had a bit to say about how she had ruined his life, his plans, his marriage and above all his peace of mind.

But when she offered her most sincere apologies and if there was anything she could do to make up for it, he had some ideas there too. And that evening reached its conclusion on the rug in front of the fire.

"I just don't think entailing property is right in this day and age. It's an old fashioned concept. The muggles got rid of it a century ago, maybe a bit less, but it was a long time ago." Hermione argued one evening.

"It is how things are done." Malfoy said. "Estates need to be kept together."

“Women are perfectly able to keep estates together.”

“But they marry and their property gets diluted.”

“That’s ridiculous. Denying property to women is just a way of suppressing them.”

“Women aren’t denied the right to hold property.” Lucius said. “There are no laws that say women cannot own property.”

“But entailing estates is fine?”

“It is needed for stability. Irrespective of intent, women join the families they marry into. And that dilutes the family. Traditions are lost, history is lost.”

“Marriage is an agreement of two people. That is all.” She said.

“But the children are born into one family. Draco is a Malfoy and will always be a Malfoy, whatever sympathy he has for the Black family, his allegiance will always be to the Malfoy name. You don’t understand such allegiance because you are a woman.”

“Oh please.” Hermione said. “Women understand allegiance and duty, it may not be in the form that you promote.”

“Women’s allegiance is to their husbands.”

“Women’s allegiance is to do what is right for her and her family. If that coincides with the husbands objectives, that great, but not necessary.”

“A society cannot challenge a bond between husband and wife, it is the foundation of society.”

“I don’t agree, doing what is best for your children is above all most important.”

“You do not understand marriage, you are too young.” He said dismissively. “A prosperous family requires unity and deference. The Blacks prove that point quite nicely. The Black name is now lost.”

Hermione had trouble arguing that the Black family was a failure considering that half of the children were disowned and one side of it killed members of the other.

“Children come first.” Hermione said.

“The family comes first, only within it will children thrive.”

They argued politics, philosophy and history every evening. Often these arguments would run in circles, hinging on the same fundamental bones of contention. Lucius valued tradition, family history and constancy, Hermione didn’t know anything about her grandparents other than their names, and she strongly felt that each person knows what is best for them. According to Hermione change allowed for better things, while Lucius felt change dilutes what works well.

Hermione could always make her views known and sometimes she could entice him to change his opinion. She knew if she got on her knees in front of his chair and nipped suggestively at his pants, he would agree to just about anything. For the pleasure of having her take him in her mouth, he would agree to give up absolutely everything. He didn’t

necessarily stick to those concessions afterwards, but it was nice to hear. Sometimes his opinions softened a bit.

Hermione began to venture out during the day. She spent time in Diagon Alley, even ran into Neville one day. It was nice to talk to one of her old friends. Ginny and Ron hadn't quite forgiven her for her treachery, as they saw it. Hermione was well used to their censure by now, but it still hurt.

Hermione had lunch with Neville again the next week, and they made it a weekly thing. Hermione knew that she had to start getting a proper life if she was going to make this work. She couldn't spend her days waiting for Lucius to come home.

She considered her option for jobs, and considered applying for a few. There were some nice jobs in the Ministry, but she wasn't sure she was up to the stifling bureaucracy. There was a research position going in a law firm that she considered.

Lucius stiffened when she mentioned that she was thinking of applying.

"You do not need to work." Lucius said. "I can more than provide for anything you require."

"But you cannot give me something to do all day."

"You can do anything you wish."

"I wish to get a job." She said. "I want to do something meaningful with my life and rattling around this big house just doesn't qualify."

Lucius was not warming to the idea, but there wasn't anything he could say. Malfoy women didn't work, but she wasn't a Malfoy. She wasn't even officially his girlfriend.

The issue of what she was, was left unanswered, but it came to a head when there was a ball planned for the end of troubles and the approach of a brand new era. People were grumbling a bit about the state of affairs and the publicity department at the Ministry felt that a ball would set everything right. It was set to be the event of the year.

Hermione was intent on going. She wanted to see people, people she hadn't seen in a while. She needed to expand her social circle. Lucius had to go due to him holding office within the Ministry, but Hermione suspected that he preferred that she stay at home, both of them ideally. But he knew better than to say so.

Hermione suggested that they go separately, and Lucius didn't like that either, but he could not suggest any other arrangement. Hermione wasn't entirely sure why he didn't like her leaving the house, but he was distinctly anxious when she left.

She bought a gown, a lovely gown in a dusty pink that went really well with her skin tone. She wasn't entirely short on cash as she could access money left to her by Harry. Lucius really didn't like that she used her own money. He had issues about money, that was certain, and rejecting his money meant something to him.

She just didn't feel right using his money, but she was having a hard time explaining that in a way that didn't sound like she was rejecting him. She just wasn't keen on the idea of patronage. It was a small distinction and she was having trouble explaining it.

They didn't enter the ball together. But he was never too far away. People wanted his attention and he was engaged in conversation the entire night.

Hermione found the younger Gryffindor set. Ginny and Ron were both there and while they were cordial, they were a little distant. It was still really good to see everyone. It turned out to be a great night. Hermione had fun. Dean asked her to dance and she accepted. It was a ball after all.

Dean took her onto the dance floor and the dance started. It was formal ballroom dancing, but it was still fun. She hadn't danced formally since school.

It didn't take long into the dance before Lucius cut in.

"I don't like you dancing with other men." He said. "I don't like them having their hands on you."

"I would not normally approve of jealousy, but I admit it is flattering." Hermione said as he held her a little too close for convention. "You can trust me you know. I am not going to run off with some guy. And if you keep holding me like this, someone is going to take note."

Lucius did not let her go.

"Perhaps people need to know that you are off limits." He said.

Hermione was having trouble reading him. He looked intent on something and it didn't become clear until he pulled her in and kissed her languidly and thoroughly.

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The public acknowledgement of Hermione made an impact. Not a material one, but there were comments, particularly from men, who seemed to approve of the idea of young nubile females. Women appeared less approving, but Lucius explained that through jealousy. No one outright challenged her heritage which pleased Lucius. He was certain most disapproved of her heritage, but would not challenge him. He savoured the knowledge that he was above the rules. He dictated and the world would take note.

The girl was an indulgence, a luxury. One he could well afford. But she was more of than indulgence, he was dependent on her. He still didn't like it, but it was something he had now accepted. He was somewhat grateful as she took her heat out of the rage that boiled in him and when he was with her, it gave him a measure of peace. It was a highly addictive state.

And he like that she challenged him, it was becoming a scarce commodity elsewhere. Sometimes she pushed him until he well and truly had to take control. And in that sense, she was becoming easier to handle. He wasn't sure what had changed, but when it came to intimate relations, she was more... he couldn't explain it, but he felt it in his gut. More connected.

But she was changing, she was expanding, seeking out away from him and he hated it. He hated the idea of her working, he hated the friends of her past. Most of all he hated that she sought the company of a young man once a week. The elves were required to inform him of her movements. It did not seem to be anything untoward with this relationship, but he still hated it. Such a relationship had potential. Potential to draw her attention away and that would leave him cold and alone.

She was relentlessly trying to move away. She said he could trust her, but she was still moving away from him.

The kiss at the ball made his claim known and that pleased him. Everyone knew who she belonged to now. He wished he could keep her in the house, safe and secure, but he could not justify it. He knew she would withdraw if he did. Oh he hated being in the position where he had to negotiate with a person who had power over him. It was not something she abused, but it still left him vulnerable. But there was a opposing new feeling developing inside him, a small thrill related to the vulnerability or rather a desire to be secure in the vulnerability.

Many of his recent invitations included a plus one. People were aware of the girl and some tried to include her, which was an unwanted side-effect of his public statement of claim. But on the other side, there was something in him that wanted other to see her. See them together. All these contradictions were disconcerting.

If he could get away with it, he would leave her at home, but he also feared leaving her at home in the evenings. If she was bored, she may seek out company. Company that may seek to undermine their relationship.

The next invitation was to an event put on by Cissa, which meant that he could not leave the girl at home. Cissa would not stand for it, so he prepared the girl for the evening. He didn't want to go, he wanted to go to bed, with her. But he could not disappear from social circles, that would be a risk of all sorts of nastiness developing and some might seek to challenge his position.

Cissa's event was at her house. A large Black property in the country. It was technically Malfoy property, but Lucius had no use for it.

"Lucius darling." Cissa said when he ran into her at the party. "I am so glad you could make it. Where is your girl?"

"She is chatting." He said. Hermione was chatting with a group of younger people. She was enjoying herself and he was working. These things were not for enjoyment as far as he was concerned, it was for surveying the lay of the land, developments and reinforcing alliances.

"There she is." Cissa said after she caught sight her target. "She looks lovely. I am glad you have acknowledged her. She deserves to be acknowledged."

"Yes." Lucius said in the way he did when he wasn't committed to the answer.

"It won't be enough, you know." Cissa said.

"What won't?" Lucius said with the feeling he got when Cissa was going to say something unpleasant.

"The acknowledgement." Cissa said with a sigh. "It may actually do the opposite from what you attended."

He hated how astute his ex-wife was. Hermione was not so astute to his reasoning and that pleased him because he was not stupid enough not to know that his ex-wife tried to manipulate him. Sadly her little bombs were often devastatingly accurate.

"She is a lovely creature and many of these young bucks know that they can offer her more than the position of a mistress." She said. "As time goes by, they will see her as more vulnerable to the temptation of stability."

"I offer stability. I am the most stable person in this room."

"Stable in what regard, dear?" Cissa said and walked away.

Cissa's little bomb exploded in his head and stayed there burning away. It was the same thing that Cissa had warned him of before, that he would not give the girl what she wanted and over time she would realise this. He had tried to ignore that potential, but it now reared its ugly head. Ignorance really was bliss. He hated Cissa for constantly pointing it out. Not that he was one to ignore developments when they could be dealt with, but this one had no easy solution.

He could not afford to lose the girl and that potential development stayed in his brain and refused to leave. Nothing seemed to change in their relationship. She was still there every evening when he came home and he loved seeing in her eyes that she was happy to see him. He loved sinking into her warm body every night. He loved arguing with her. And he was now concerned that he would not survive if he lost her again.

"I thought perhaps we could go on a trip." Lucius said one evening.

"A trip would be lovely." Hermione's face lit up. "Where are we going?"

"I thought we could go to Ireland for a few days."

"Ok. I've never been to Ireland. I hear its lovely. When do you want to go?"

"This weekend."

"A weekend getaway." Hermione said and bit her lip in a way she knew undid him. A way that said she was thinking naughty things.

"Draco will be coming." Lucius said.

Hermione coughed into her wine. "Oh?"

"We need a witness."

"A witness for what?" Hermione asked very guardedly.

"For the wedding." Lucius said. "Our wedding."

Hermione stared at him.

"I am sure you can find something to wear." Lucius said.

"I suppose." Hermione said after a long pause.

"Good. It is settled then." Lucius said. "I have some correspondence to see to in my study. I will see you upstairs in an hour or so. Why don't you have a bath."

Lucius retreated to his study. He wasn't sure why, but his heart was beating hard. He wasn't entirely sure the girl would agree, but she had accepted it and he was pleased. He needed a drink and some time alone to let the adrenalin settle. He also liked sitting in his study imagining her upstairs in a bath. It built anticipation so deliciously. The he would walk upstairs heady with encompassing tension, like a drug coursing through him.

There was a unique pleasure to know that she was his now, truly his. Or would be in just a few days. He would have this forever. For years, he could sit here in his study and imagine her in the bath. Know that every night, he could come home to someone, someone who wanted him there.

He would in a few short days possess the most wonderful creature in the world.

She was subdued when the day came. They travelled by portkey to one of the small, isolated Island that had a small property that had been in the family for nearly three hundred years. Draco met them there with the celebrant that would perform the vows and the rite.

Hermione's dress was simple and elegant. He approved. She looked lovely, she had some flowers in her hair. The vows were given and the charms were cast. Draco witnessed the signatures and it was done. She was his.

He couldn't wait for the others to leave. He wanted to kiss her. It was a wedding that could not have been more different from his first. The first had been a huge event with invitations to just about every known family in the wizard world. There were even overseas dignitaries. But

the biggest difference was that he wanted this one. This was not about duty. Potentially the only thing he had ever done officially that wasn't about duty. And he was happy. A light feeling that permeated everything.

She was crying, but not the distressing kind. He held her briefly before he had to see the celebrant to the floo.

"You've done it now, Granger." Draco said. "This is it, no way out now."

"I know."

"I've warned you before." Draco said. "He is not a saint. He's not even a nice man."

"I know."

"If you hurt him, I'll kill you." Draco warned.

"Duly noted." Hermione said and Draco walked out of the room as Lucius returned.

They were alone at last. He had a late luncheon planned in the sun room. It over-looked the sea on this desolate island. He had spent a few summers here as a child. It held some of the good memories from his childhood.

Hermione was subdued.

"No regrets?" He asked.

"No." She said. "I think this was the only outcome for us."

He nodded and ate the roast beef lunch.

They waited till dark to retreat to the bed chamber up stairs. Hermione had stayed in the dress, an off white silk dress that brushed her curves nicely. He wanted to take the dress off her and he waited all afternoon. They watched the sun set over the ocean. Hermione said she liked the house very much. It was so remote it felt like the rest of the world didn't exist.

The hours of the afternoon passed slowly, but they made a point of denying themselves and just sitting there stewing in their desire. But shortly after dusk, they went upstairs in the quiet house. Not even the elves were there. They were completely alone.

The dress came off in one, and left some undergarments of lace and the lovely warm skin of hers. And that look on her face that said she wanted him now. He'd had enough of waiting, he needed to touch her now. Because, over the last few months, his notion of home had been rewritten. And now his home was her.

The wait had made her impatient. She helped him divert his clothes and seemed to seek out the skin to skin caresses. But she was not willing to put up with too much teasing tonight. She wanted him. She straddled him on the bed and sought out how the best fit together while she took off the remaining clothes.

He watched her as she ground her hips to him. The sensations were delicious as where the sights of her enjoying them. She couldn't wait any further so she prepared and sunk down on him. The delicious heat of her core enveloped him and shifted the grip reality held.

Her slow movements were exquisite and she moaned with each. This was heaven. But there was still that little niggle, the one that detracted from complete possession. The one that stopped this from being utterly true and complete. And he needed to possess her completely. He would not tolerate this being a facsimile, this needed to be authentic in every possible way. No barriers.

He reached for his wand and cast the spell on her belly that would remove all barriers. She was too caught up in sensation to notice, but he felt the difference in his soul.

He rolled her over and took control. He loved giving her rein to ride him, but for this he needed to be in control. He needed to be on top.

Chapter 40

Epilogue

Hermione gave birth around nine months after they got married. A girl they named Persephone. A blond little creature that unquestionably wiggled her way into his heart like no one else could. An endlessly inquisitive thing that bossed the elves around until they all danced to her tune.

His two girls were everything and he'd had no idea what he had been striving for, but this was it. Maybe somewhere deep in his bones, he'd been seeking this all along. They quelled his rage completely and he had peace.

The burden of duty passed to Draco and he eventually produced a son to carry on the family name.

Before Persephone was two, Lucius was offered the role of Minister of Magic. Over time, people had come to trust his judgement and the role was outright offered to him. He had the ability to see many sides of the problem, a skill he had acquired by always being presented with the opposing view in the evenings. He had also been able to consider problems in terms of what was best for the wizard world, even the somewhat more wearily welcomed bits of it.

He still hated people taking her attention away, especially young men with a look in their eye. But equally, it gave him endless pleasure to know that none of them could have her. She was his.

Lucius now had everything he wanted. His entire being was no longer striving for something. For control. For recognition. And all because a girl who stole into his life and refused to leave. Who would have thought.